ELECTION SPECIAL!

the weekly Standard

NOVEMBER 16, 1998 $3.50

WHAT NEXT?

A Teetering Republican Majority
WILLIAM KRISTOL & DAVID TELL

The Presidential Race Begins
FRED BARNES

A Party of Governors
MICHAEL BARONE

The Triumph of Clintonism
DAVID FRUM

A Nation of Consenting Adults
HARVEY MANSFIELD

The Armies of the Right
ANDREW FERGUSON

SCRAPBOOK EXTRAVAGANZA!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 10 • NOVEMBER 16, 1998

5 SCRAPBOOK
THE SCRAPBOOK attends a mélange of Election Night parties.

12 CASUAL
Joseph Epstein writes of talk.

14 CORRESPONDENCE

17 EDITORIAL
How to Attack Iraq

48 PARODY

WHAT NEXT?

20 A TEETERING REPUBLICAN MAJORITY
Conservatism has a powerful case to make. Will no one come forward to make it? *by* WILLIAM KRISTOL & DAVID TELL

21 THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE BEGINS
George W. Bush is the front-runner—a desirable but dangerous status. *by* FRED BARNES

26 A PARTY OF GOVERNORS
To find the Republican pulse, go to the state capitals. *by* MICHAEL BARONE

29 THE ARMIES OF THE RIGHT
The anti-Clintonites march on Washington. *by* ANDREW FERGUSON

32 THE TRIUMPH OF CLINTONISM
The Democrats aren't the only party the president has corrupted. *by* DAVID FRUM

35 A NATION OF CONSENTING ADULTS
Has Clinton persuaded us that anything goes, so long as it's consensual and "private"? *by* HARVEY MANSFIELD

Books & Arts

39 INNOCENTS ABROAD Europe on five dollars a day. *by* BRIAN MURRAY

44 SYRIA KILLER The peace process according to Rabinovich. *by* DANIEL PIPES

46 UP FROM CYNICISM Moral guidance from a surrogate father. *by* NORAH VINCENT

William Kristol, *Editor and Publisher* **Fred Barnes,** *Executive Editor*
David Tell, *Opinion Editor* **David Brooks, Andrew Ferguson,** *Senior Editors* **Richard Starr, Claudia Winkler,** *Managing Editors*
J. Bottum, *Books & Arts Editor* **Christopher Caldwell,** *Senior Writer* **Jay Nordlinger,** *Associate Editor*
Tucker Carlson, Matt Labash, Matthew Rees, *Staff Writers* **Kent Bain,** *Art Director*
Victorino Matus, *Assistant Editor* **Katherine Rybak,** *Assistant Art Director* **Jonathan V. Last, Pia Nordlinger,** *Reporters*
John J. DiIulio Jr., Joseph Epstein, David Frum, David Gelernter, Brit Hume,
Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, P. J. O'Rourke, John Podhoretz, *Contributing Editors*
David H. Bass, *Deputy Publisher* **Jennifer L. Felten,** *Business Manager*
Nicholas H.B. Swezey, *Advertising & Marketing Manager* **John L. Mackall,** *Advertising Sales Manager* **Lauren C. Trotta,** *Circulation Director*
Doris Ridley, Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistants* **Jamie L. Kolton, Adam Langley, Ian Slatter,** *Staff Assistants*

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except for combined issues dated July 6-July 13, Aug. 10-Aug. 17, Nov. 30-Dec. 7, and Dec. 28-Jan. 4) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.50. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Natalie Harwood, 1-610-293-8540. Copyright 1998, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5:21 P.M.—Democratic National Committee Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

A receptionist picks up the phone at DNC headquarters, a modern office building in the shadow of an overpass half a mile south of the Capitol. It's a reporter on the line, calling to ask about the poll numbers that have begun leaking out of the networks. It looks like some surprising Democratic wins. "Which makes it kind of a shame you're not having a party," the reporter adds. The DNC has announced through every possible grapevine over the past two days that there will be no post-election party this year *because we never hold them for off-year elections*. That's news to the reporters who've been calling all afternoon. They figure that the Democrats are either (a) strapped for cash or (b) worried they'll get blown out.

"Oh, but we *are* having a party!" the receptionist interrupts. "Get over here at 8 o'clock!"

So it was (b). And they're not worried anymore.

7:30 P.M.—Republican National Committee Victory Party, Ronald Reagan International Trade Center, Washington, D.C.

The party's just started, and it has the deflated feel of a high-school dance an hour before the prom queen and the star quarterback arrive. A 10-piece oldies band is cranking out the Tom Jones hit "It's Not Unusual," but no one's dancing. (Actually, no one's danced to "It's Not Unusual" in 30 years.) A small army of RNC staffers, draped in bright red sweatshirts with the logo "Celebrate '98," buzz around haplessly, with nothing to do. A pair of Republican lobbyists are passing out cigars bearing labels that read "The Big Lewinsky." When they spot a woman wearing a Monica-like beret, they dart right over and flirt shamelessly, and who can blame them? Meanwhile the press room is so dead no one's even dipping into the free beer. This could be a long night.

8:00 P.M.—New York Hilton, GOP Celebration, New York City

It's still early, but already New York Republicans in the ballroom are filled with foreboding. Exit polls show Sen. Alfonse D'Amato down by as much as 10 points. Immediately the rumor spreads through the ballroom: The exit-polling company has messed up the sample! The results are so unreliable, TV stations nationwide are throwing out the whole batch of results! That's the officially approved scuttlebutt, anyway.

But there are signs the rumor is baloney. One D'Amato staffer insists that the exit polls are contradicted by the "anecdotal evidence." And besides, the poll numbers are from New York *City*, where D'Amato is notoriously weak. And . . . and . . .

Why is this guy spinning the exit polls? It's too late. Spinning after the polls close can't do any good. But fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, and a staffer's gotta spin. Deep down he knows the truth. When a friend introduces him as "a D'Amato staffer," he mumbles: "Well, for a few more hours."

8:15 P.M.—Ruby Tuesday's, Marietta, Ga.

"We like Newt, but we *love* Bob Barr," says Sally Vaci, a graphic designer who lives right here in Newt Gingrich's hometown. Vaci, along with her husband, has found her way to the bar at Ruby Tuesday's to watch the returns on CNN. Vaci doesn't work in politics, but she seems to know at least as much about the elections as many people who do, and a lot more about the Lewinsky scandal. That's because of FreeRepublic.com, a web site where anti-Clinton netheads mull over the latest outrage from Washington.

"I'm always lurking at FreeRepublic," Vaci explains. "So is Lucianne Goldberg. She always e-mails me back. At FreeRepublic, she goes by 'Trixie.'" Before Vaci has a chance to elaborate—*Trixie*?—CNN announces that Fob James has just lost his job as Alabama governor. Moments later, it becomes clear that Sen. Lauch Faircloth, too, is off the government payroll, back to full-time hog

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

farming. The bar is silent. Ginny Williams, a pleasant young Gingrich staffer from South Georgia who is standing nearby, looks like she might cry. "I don't understand what's happening," she says.

8:18 P.M.—RNC Victory Party, Reagan Building, Washington, D.C.

The prom queen and the star quarterback still haven't arrived, but the place is filling up with people who look oddly as though they wished they were somewhere else. Armstrong Williams, the hyperactive radio-talk-show host, comes to the podium and tries to whip the lethargic crowd into a frenzy, Republican-style. "This night is still young!" he shouts. This is a pretty inexperienced crowd, but even they sense the obvious: Winners don't use lines like "The night is still young!" Losers do, especially when they realize the night is almost over.

8:45 P.M.—AFL-CIO Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

You might think that, after several decades of plundering members' paychecks, the greatest labor guild in the world would have a more impressive headquarters. But up here on the eighth floor, in a conference room overlooking the White House, the style is strictly tech-school baroque.

The union royalty have gathered to watch the returns, and in the crowd by a buffet table stacked with meats and melons and chicken-carcass discard bowls union president John Sweeney is congratulating himself and the American people for focusing on the Real Issues as opposed to presidential indiscretions.

But what about those indiscretions? he's asked. What would happen to *him* if *he* were ingested by an intern and got caught? Sweeney contorts his face like a Mephistophelean Mickey Rooney and laughs until the dry-scalp detritus shakes from his rounded shoulders.

"I don't even think about that," he snorts. "I don't think that's a problem that I have to be concerned about." And as you look around the room at the company he keeps—a motley assemblage of red-diaper grandbabies and woolhat wannabes—you can't help believing him.

8:45 P.M.—DNC Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

The press has come for the impromptu party. But a half-dozen stringy-haired coed volunteers (one is reading a book called *American Apartheid*) are manning the right-hand side of a gauntlet in the lobby.

The left-hand side is manned by three or four security guards. Journalists are to go down the hall to the press room, say the girls. Apparently, there are parties going on upstairs, because ruddy activist-looking types keep wandering in from their cigarette breaks in the driveway (this is a non-smoking environment) and lurching towards the elevators—or toward the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee offices, on this floor—with juice-based cocktails in plastic tumblers.

Whenever a journalist begins to drift along with them, the girls stop him with a scolding *"Ap-ap-ap-ap-ap!"* The journalist says, "What?" And the security guards say, "Sir!"

So it's down a hallway full of offices to the press room, a 20-by-20 holding pen where reporters are kept for hourly force-feedings of spin from DNC chairmen Roy Romer and Steve Grossman. The one plastic plate of crudités is 99 percent gone, and the Diet Cokes are all gone. Five undergrad-age DNC volunteers (including Miss *American Apartheid*) are stationed at the doorway to keep the journalists from wandering into offices and doing interviews (*"Ap-ap-ap-ap-ap!"*).

The mood is one of serving a detention, and some people are trapped here—the foreign journalists who have no place else to go and a handful of cameramen who are accumulating Romer footage in dribs and drabs. But the journalists who don't meet either description soon drift off into the night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tonight!" So Republicans are going to eke out a "great" victory in overtime? The night is young!

9:00 P.M.—AFL-CIO Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

John Sweeney swigs Cabernet out of a plastic cup, but don't be misled: The AFL-CIO also serves lunchbucket suds, American-made—Bud or Bud Light for these horny-handed sons of toil. The only imports here are the waiters, who are quick to point out that they're union and that they're leaving at 10 o'clock sharp—whether the partygoers are finished or not.

The mood here at Labor HQ is cheery enough, but attendees don't neglect to set a good example: All night long, they scrupulously take their news from CNN, in yet another sacrifice in the long, twilight struggle between Labor and Capitol. After ABC camera workers, desk assistants, and publicists staged a one-day walkout on Monday and were locked out by their bosses on Election Day, their brethren at the AFL-CIO are maintaining a united front. At the bottom of every television set in the conference room is a handwritten note: "Please do not switch to ABC."

8:45 P.M.—RNC Party, Reagan Building, Washington, D.C.

Trent Lott is here! He takes the stage to warm applause, but his remarks are lackluster. His big applause line: "When this night is over, we will have picked up seats in the United States Senate!" The line lands with a thud, and as Lott often does in difficult situations, he quickly makes matters worse. He begins to improvise with a story about having recently attended a football game pitting Ole Miss—his alma mater—against LSU. "At the end of this game, it was tied," says Lott, savoring his words. "But in overtime—Ole Miss won! It was a great victory, and that's what we're going to have

9:15 P.M.—New York Hilton, GOP Celebration Party, New York City

The ballroom is pulsating with all the frenzied energy we associate with the name "Pataki." A group of gray-suited Tommy Newsome clones mill about the half-filled chamber. "Lets make some noise!" the master of ceremonies screams. Tepid applause."Come on people! Let's make some noise!" Tepid cheers. "Give me a P!" Silence. "Give me an A!" Silence. The emcee gives up.

On the big screen, Pataki's opponent, Peter Vallone, is conceding his defeat. "We put New York's children first," he declares. (Tonight even the con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cessions are dull.) Soon enough, the Pataki family comes on-stage, looking like the kind of people you'd want for neighbors. Which is good, because New York is stuck with them for another four years. Pataki has just been reelected by a historic margin. This year, it seems, the bland, respectable candidates are the ones who've done well. This is ominous news for D'Amato.

9:20 P.M.—Outside the National Democratic Club, Washington, D.C.

Okay, *here's* the Big Democratic Party party, in yacht-club-esque surroundings right next door to the Democratic National Committee. But some old ladies are zealously vetting the guests, and they're keeping the press out. There's a buy-a-ticket cash bar, we learn. Cheers erupt from within. CNN has just announced Schumer beating D'Amato.

"What was that?" a man in a suit asks the closest guy to him.

A dapper, mustachioed fellow says, "Damned if I know!"

"Can I just pop in to take a look?" says another fellow in a suit, who has foolishly left his press pass on.

"Sir!" the old lady at the ticket counter says, craning around for security. "This is a private club!" *Wouldn't you prefer to go back to the detention room and watch C-SPAN and wait for Steve Grossman?*

9:22 P.M.—Ruby Tuesday's, Marietta, Ga.

The bar is still glum, as the beer-drinkers imbibe the crushing news about Lauch and Fob. A couple of brave Republicans try to put the best face on the news. "Remember, that's a CNN *estimate*," says one. "That's the Clinton News Network talking." No one else seems convinced. Within about a beer, the night's trend becomes undeniable. Sally Vaci is explaining how she and her husband recently went to see Chris Ruddy, the anti-Clinton journalist, speak in a conference room at a local hotel about the Vince Foster "suicide" ("There weren't 18 teeth total in the room," her husband says). Suddenly, word arrives that Al D'Amato has lost his Senate seat. Vaci stops talking and looks up at the television. A leering Chuck Schumer fills the screen. There's no blaming it on CNN this time. "No," she says, "no, no."

9:59 P.M.—DNC Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

The boredom—and the hermetic isolation—have been so bad that one camerawoman for a Japanese network has spent the last hour diligently filling dozens of 4-by-6 index cards with handwriting. Look down, and you'll notice they read, "Roommate wanted: Male, Non-smoker . . ."

The cameramen have been promised an appearance by Romer, so they've taken their positions and set their shots. With a minute to spare, one of the 21-year-old detention wardens comes in to say, "Steve Grossman, our national chairman, is gonna come in and make a *real quick* statement so you guys can get some footage before you file."

"Oh, yes—that *would* be nice," one of the cameramen mutters. "Some footage!"

"How much you guys need?" asks the warden. "Ten seconds? A minute?"

Grossman arrives with a flourish and strings out a line of such platitudes that the cameramen grumble that it's nothing any of them can use. It's certainly nothing anyone can remember.

Romer's supposed to be back at 10:30, but at 10:20 the warden comes in and says he'll be half an hour late. The journalists are at the end of their patience. Half of them leave. But before they do . . . There's a white-haired guy in an elegant cashmere coat who's been wandering around the room all night with no press credentials, only a suspicious "New York Delegation" pass of some sort.

A print reporter stops him and says, "Hey, man, is there some kind of Schumer party in town?"

"Yes," the man says.

All right! A couple of journalists gather around. "Well . . . well, can we get into it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes."

Terrific! "Where is it?"

"Yes." And as the journalists look on puzzled, the man continues, "Ess-choomer hoe-kay. D'Amato?" He makes a thumbs-down and goes: "*P-p-p-p-p-p!*"

I *love* the Democratic party platform! I just don't happen to speak English!

10:05 P.M.—RNC Defeat Party, Reagan Building, Washington, D.C.

The bad news is settling in—starting to seem real. Some take this as a cue to leave, others to dance. But really: Somebody has to do something about this music. "It's Not Unusual" was bad enough. But now, just as the big-screen TVs announce another Republican defeat, the band cranks up to top volume and plays Kool and the Gang's "Celebration." If Republicans lose the House, they'll probably haul out "Ode to Joy." With a disco beat.

The effervescent Armstrong Williams suddenly returns to the stage, urging the crowd to persuade the media that "We're not dead." Finally, a Republican message for the new millennium: "We're Not Dead!"

10:10 P.M.—Mayflower Hotel, Washington D.C.

This is where supporters of D.C. mayoral candidate Anthony Williams (no relation to Armstrong) have come to celebrate their man's victory. Spirits are high—and not merely because of Williams's crushing defeat of his Republican rival. All night, partiers have been buzzing about the North Carolina Senate race and the fate of Lauch Faircloth. Since the Republican congressional takeover, Faircloth has been merciless in hounding the District's inept city government.

Those days are over. Soon-to-be-former mayor Marion Barry is at the microphone to spread the good news. "I just spoke to Alexis Herman," Barry purrs, "and she told me that Lauch Faircloth lost." The crowd erupts and Barry slashes the air with his outstretched hand. "Lost! . . . lost! . . . lost! . . . *lost*! We're buying Sen. Faircloth a bus ticket back to North Carolina—to live with the *pigs*!" Barry is relishing the triumph, before himself retiring to parts unknown.

11:45 P.M.—New York Hilton, GOP Victory Party, New York City

Twenty-five minutes stuck in an elevator with Alfonse D'Amato and Ed Koch. Let's repeat that: Twenty-five minutes stuck in an elevator with BOTH Alfonse D'Amato and Ed Koch. There are now twelve people in the world who know how that feels. The rest of us can wear little black lapel ribbons: Free the New York Twelve!

Here's what happened. A half hour ago, D'Amato and his entourage were heading downstairs for his concession speech. The elevator's capacity was eight riders. Senator Pothole, Mr. Can-do, crammed in 14 riders. And the elevator stopped between floors. For twenty-five minutes. With 14 people. Including Ed Koch. This is not D'Amato's lucky night.

There is nobody in the U.S. Senate whom it is so fashionable to disdain as Alfonse D'Amato. Polite opinion finds him esthetically displeasing. But when he takes the stage and begins his valedictory, he looks cheerful and brave. "Never in my wildest dreams," he says, "did I think I would have the privilege to serve this state for 18 years." It's surprisingly moving to see him there, being so intimate and emotional. He's opening up, making an effort. Being a good guy. The Pothole Man has a heart. He may not have inspired idealism or grandeur during his long Washington tenure. But now, at the end, he's touchingly graceful and warm. Surely that counts for something.

As the ballroom empties, at least one D'Amato fan takes the long view. "As I told Mike Tyson on New Year's Eve," this fellow tells a companion, "you got to keep on battling." Talk about a privilege! Just to be in the same room as the one Republican in America who can start a sentence with "As I told Mike Tyson" seems to open up limitless vistas of opportunity. Maybe there's hope after all for Republicans. You just got to keep on battling.

—*Reported by the staff of* The Weekly Standard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Casual

Great Talk

On April 11, 1819, John Keats, on his way to meet his publisher, ran into one of his former medical-school teachers, Joseph Green, who introduced him to his companion, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, one of the famous talkers of his day. Sad to report, one of the means to becoming a famous talker is being an infamous non-listener. On this count, too, Coleridge qualified. Keats joined the two men for a two-mile walk toward Highgate, during which time he failed to get in a word edge- or any other which-wise. In a letter to his brother George in America, Keats wrote: "I heard his voice as he came toward me—I heard it as he moved away—I heard it all the interval—if it may be called so."

Many of the world's great talkers have been men whose minds were overstuffed with erudition and general information. It is as if they must find a way to release it, lest they burst from sheer overload. My own list of great talkers includes Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, Lord Macaulay, and, closer to our own day, André Malraux, Edmund Wilson, Sir Isaiah Berlin, and the art historian Meyer Schapiro. A man I know reports that Schapiro once stopped him in the street and detained him for a little more than forty minutes with an uninterrupted one-way flow of talk, before remarking, as they parted, "I can't tell you how much I enjoyed our conversation."

The great talker is generally also a fast talker. Samuel Johnson didn't need to talk so quickly, but then, in Boswell, he had the perfect straight man—a human appliance no great talker should be without—feeding him subjects and eliciting opinions. Macaulay was described by a contemporary as a talking book, but, unlike a book, he couldn't be shut up.

Edmund Wilson, no un-Sanfordized violet himself, wrote of André Malraux's conversational style that "he likes to talk on his feet and jump around. His expositions are punctuated by *bon!* and *bien!*, nailing the point just made before rushing on to the next step." One imagines Wilson himself as more sedentary, more relentless, at the head of a table, pouring out booze and talk, neither with a light hand. Everyone who knew him speaks of the speed of Isaiah Berlin's talk, a veritable Gatling gun—rat-a-tat-tat—of chat.

The only great talker I have known well, my late friend Edward Shils, also had a speedy and unhesitant delivery. Well into his eighties, he never needed to stop to recall a name or the title of a book. He spoke fast for the obvious reason that he wanted to get everything in—or, rather, out. Like the few truly great scholars I have known, Edward had a powerful memory. One thing led to another and that to yet another. Lest he monologize through the night, I had to learn the not always gentle art of breaking-in. He never upbraided me for doing so.

The combination of powerful memory and high IQ makes for the rapid speech of the great talkers: Their minds, so well stocked, work quickly. Information must be released speedily, for more is on the way. They tend to be polymathic, knowing not one but several things well. Great talkers are tolerable—and at their best, of course, much more than tolerable—because they really do have great talk, comprising wide knowledge, deep insight, brilliant formulation, wit, and impressive anecdotes.

Great talkers may already be a thing of the past. Men with the intellectual power, conversational style, and social energy to set up as great talkers may soon become rarer than authentic 1960s heroes. There are still some amusing talkers, whose whimsy and original point of view confer pure pleasure. But amusing talkers are vastly outnumbered by bores—if I may shift abruptly into diatribe here—heavy-breathing, preening, world-class bores.

I dined out twice last week and ran into two such bores. The first was a dirty-joke-telling bore. Mixed company causing him to lose not a step, he gurgitated an endless stream of Viagra, lawyer, and fellatio jokes. He seemed to take a certain pleasure in making everyone else at the table edgy: the bore melting neatly into the boor. He at least seemed greatly to approve of his own performance.

My other bore was of the academic variety, a man to whom, it soon became plain, one could tell nothing. He was the evening's designated teller. He pretended to listen, but one sensed that he really was only waiting—waiting to continue his own endless campaign to bring us the real lowdown, the truth, the gospel, his version.

One's heart went out to his wife, who revivified the term "long-suffering." No doubt he returned home and, in bed, before turning out the light, remarked to her that the other people at dinner had seemed to him, on balance, rather dull.

Confident bores give talk, even great talk, a bad name. Should Dan Aykroyd ever choose to make a movie called *Borebusters*, he'd have my eight bucks in a flash.

Joseph Epstein

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Correspondence

'Renewal' Is Nonpartisan

Andrew Ferguson says that Call to Renewal was founded "so that Christian liberals could become mere courtiers to the power of the executive branch" ("Atoning with Tony," Oct. 12).

The original "Cry for Renewal" was endorsed by a wide range of Christian leaders, from conservative evangelicals to Catholic bishops to leaders of the black church. When the statement was publicly launched in the spring of 1995, we held separate meetings with Speaker Newt Gingrich and the minority leader, Dick Gephardt, not with President Clinton. If Ferguson had read the original statement, he would have seen that it is critical of both liberals and conservatives—we articulated a new Christian political vision. In the three years since then, we have maintained working contacts with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. Our roundtable discussions on poverty and welfare reform have had participants such as the Promise Keepers, the Family Research Council, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the National Council of Churches. To dismiss this growing movement as "mere courtiers" is both insulting and a misreading of history.

Similarly, Ferguson claims that "Call to Renewal organized more than 40 town meetings in the month before the 1996 election, in hopes of transcending those 'doctrinaire ideological approaches to the issues' and reelecting President Clinton." Again, if he had done some basic research, he would have found that the national conference that began our town-meeting tour included my being quoted on the front page of the *New York Times* as saying to President Clinton: "Be sure your sin will find you out." The remainder of the tour, from Milwaukee to Austin to Seattle to Miami to Boston to Nashville and many other places, was highly critical of the president and generated news coverage across the country reflecting that criticism.

Call to Renewal is a movement of Christians seeking new approaches to the problems of American life—we are dedicated to overcoming poverty, dismantling racism, affirming life, and rebuilding family and community—an agenda that is neither liberal nor conservative, and that is most certainly not simply supporting President Clinton.

Jim Wallis
Convener
Call to Renewal
Washington, DC

Wisdom of Frenchmen

William Styron is correct—the French do not have an "equivalent of the American South, where a strain of Protestant fundamentalism is so maniacal" ("Not a Parody," Oct. 19). For the most part, the French Protestants were systematically massacred in the later 1500s and early 1600s in the

Eight Wars. Could Styron be suggesting the same methods be employed in the United States so as to prevent the "dismantling" of the present presidency?

Gerald W. Benson
New Hope, MN

Learning How to Read

In an otherwise excellent article, John J. DiIulio Jr. makes the serious mistake of saying that the debate over whether to teach reading by using phonics or whole-language instruction is irrelevant ("My School Choice: Literacy First," Oct. 19). For all he has seen that works in increasing literacy, he utterly misses the single biggest reason for illiteracy among schoolchildren in the last 30 years.

We removed three of our four children from an "excellent" suburban public school because they weren't learning how to read. They were even being placed in special reading classes.

My investigation of the reasons for this led to the discovery of the use of whole-language techniques, for which there are no intellectual underpinnings. Whole-language methods depend on such tactics as guessing, "inventive spelling," looking at pictures, and even looking at "shapes" of words. These methods may work for learning an ideographic language, such as Chinese, but not for a phonetic language such as English.

Public schools have widely eschewed not only the teaching of systematic phonics, for whose efficacy there is ample empirical evidence, but also of the "old-fashioned" use of such things as rote, drill, and memorization, for which there is no real substitute. Look at any elementary schools that are truly successful in widely increasing the literacy rate and you will find (perhaps along with some of the other things DiIulio mentions) the use of systematic phonics applied in a direct-instruction approach.

The implementation of whole-language methods by public schools across the nation, with the resulting decline in literacy, and then a total failure to recognize that fact and change it, is one of the many reasons that public schools have been in precipitous decline.

The difference is crucial, and must be widely recognized if sweeping changes in literacy are to be effected.

Ron Kruis
Grand Rapids, MI

The Weekly Standard
welcomes letters to the editor.
Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number.
All letters should be addressed:
Correspondence Editor
The Weekly Standard
1150 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036.
You may also fax letters: (202) 293-4901.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the weekly Standard

How to Attack Iraq

It now seems fairly certain that some time in the next few weeks the Clinton administration will have to strike Iraq. There really are no acceptable alternatives. Saddam's recent demand for the expulsion of the U.N. weapons inspectors and for the removal of Richard Butler as head of the inspections regime is mostly a ploy to buy time. Saddam would, of course, like to force the United States and the U.N. to agree to further dilution of the already badly compromised inspection effort.

The deal he wangled with U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan last February has so far worked out wonderfully for him. The next deal he wants would look something like this: In return for backing down from his latest challenge, Saddam is rewarded with a U.N. Security Council commitment to wrap up its review of Iraq's compliance with the inspections regime and to move quickly to lift economic sanctions. France and Russia would agree to such a deal in a heartbeat. But even if the Clinton administration blocked it at the Security Council, Saddam wouldn't mind. The longer the present crisis lasts, the more weeks the United States spends arguing with its allies and with Russia, the closer Saddam comes to his real objective: finally acquiring chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them.

CIA director George Tenet said last January that Iraq already had the "technological expertise" to produce biological weapons "in a matter of weeks." And according to former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter, Saddam needs only six months without inspectors looking over his shoulder to build those weapons and deploy them on missiles capable of reaching Israel and other targets in the Middle East. Saddam has already bought himself three of those months, since the inspections effectively came to a halt at the beginning of August. He's halfway home. By the time the newly elected Congress returns to Washington, we could well be facing a Saddam armed with some of the most dangerous weapons known to man.

Even the Clinton administration must now realize that its preferred strategy—diplomacy backed by bluff—has failed and that Saddam is an inch away from (to use the administration's lingo) "breaking out of his box." Even the president and his team must know that more diplomatic compromises will only play into Saddam's hands. More hollow threats of force, more empty declarations that "all options are on the table," will only further erode America's already badly damaged credibility. As the Iraqi vice president said a few days ago, "Iraq does not fear the threats of the United States because it has been threatening Iraq for the past eight years." Even the Clinton administration, confronted by the inescapable and horrible logic of the situation, will soon come to the conclusion that military action is necessary.

> EVEN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION MUST REALIZE THAT ITS PREFERRED STRATEGY—DIPLOMACY BACKED BY BLUFF—HAS FAILED.

But what kind of military action? Last February the administration geared itself up for a strike, only to realize belatedly that the action it had planned—a cruise-missile attack to destroy suspected Iraqi weapons-production sites—was not going to solve the problem. For one thing, military planners could not be confident that they knew where all the production facilities were—after all, that was precisely what the U.N. inspectors had been prevented from finding out. And for another thing, when all the U.S. missiles had been fired, Saddam would still be in power in Baghdad. What would military action have accomplished? The answer, the administration concluded, was not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much. That's one of the reasons Clinton officials decided to embrace the lousy deal that Kofi Annan negotiated with the Iraqi government.

So now we're back to where we were in February: the same crisis, the same high stakes, the same unpleasant options. The Clinton administration, of course, would still prefer to launch a cruise-missile attack because it carries almost no political or military risk. But officials should remember what they learned last February: It won't work.

It won't work, that is, if that's all the United States does. There is a way to deal with Saddam that can work, and we've outlined it in these pages over the past year: It is to complete the unfinished business of the 1991 Gulf War and get rid of Saddam.

Any sustained bombing and missile campaign against Iraq should be part of an overall political-military strategy aimed at removing Saddam from power. And as it happens, the elements of such a strategy are already falling into place. On Saturday, President Clinton signed into law the Iraq Liberation Act, which authorizes the provision of almost $100 million in military assistance to anti-Saddam forces in Iraq. The idea, as outlined by former undersecretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz and others, is to establish a "liberated zone" in southern Iraq that would provide a safe haven where opponents of Saddam could rally and organize a credible alternative to the present regime.

This is not a plan for victory on the cheap: The liberated zone would have to be protected by U.S. military might, both from the air and, if necessary, on the ground. And that would require beefing up our ground and air forces in the Middle East immediately. But unlike a one-shot cruise-missile strike, the Wolfowitz plan offers a chance for a lasting solution to the Iraqi crisis.

Saddam Hussein's behavior over the past year, not to mention over the past twenty years, ought to have proved that the world will never be safe, and U.S. interests and allies will never be secure, so long as Saddam is in charge in Baghdad. Unless we are prepared to live in a world where aggressive dictators like Saddam Hussein wield weapons of mass destruction—presumably not the legacy for which President Clinton would like to be remembered—then the time has come to take the necessary risks to prevent it. There is no more middle ground; there are no more safe options. Maybe even Bill Clinton now understands. ♦

Michael Ramirez

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT NEXT?

A Teetering Republican Majority

By William Kristol and David Tell

American political parties hardly ever concede what's "bad" in a given campaign result. The dark cloud is always a meteorological anomaly; what *really matters* is the silver lining. Sometimes—rarely—this is actually true. It is partly true where official Republican explanations for the 1998 mid-term elections are concerned. And the part that's true is . . . well, better than nothing.

GOP press releases urge that the party's poor showing in this past Tuesday's congressional canvass be interpreted in the context of Clinton-era partisan realignment. In 1992 there were 267 Democratic members of the House. In 1999, even after last week's 5-seat pick-up, there will be just 211. In the Senate, Democrats have sustained proportionally comparable net losses—12 seats—over the same period. All told, roughly 20 percent of the Democrats' Capitol Hill caucus has disappeared.

In state and local politics, the story is much the same. Democrats held more than half the nation's governorships in 1992; today they hold barely a third of them. More than 500 state legislative seats across the country have switched hands to the GOP these past six years; here, Democrats appear close to aggregate minority status for the first time in almost half a century. The nation's two largest cities have Republican mayors.

And so on. Viewed this way, at an Olympian remove, it is the picture of a Democratic party in decline: its regional and demographic New Deal coalition eroded; its once-crystalline agenda of liberalism grown mushy and indistinct; and its electoral appeal, every two years like clockwork, now primarily restricted to fear-mongering about the "mean-spirited" GOP.

This is not exactly a false account of current reality. Or an altogether unhappy one, in general terms, for the Republican party. The size and scope of recent history's cumulative GOP victories remain genuinely impressive. And yet it is a dishonest Republican who tells you he is not—at best—profoundly disappointed by Tuesday's election returns. And it is a foolish Republican who fails to see something positively ominous bubbling under the surface of those returns.

By the sixth year of any presidency, almost without fail in past experience, the White House is bruised and exhausted, voters are restless and impatient, and the opposition party makes significant gains in the House and Senate. Such a formula does not apply to this White House, GOP spin doctors point out. Bill Clinton suffered his mid-term election repudiation early, in the Year Two Republican landslide of 1994. So there was relatively little room left for Republicans to advance in 1998, and expectations should have been adjusted accordingly.

> HAD THE GOP MADE THE RACE A CHOICE BETWEEN LEGISLATIVE AGENDAS, ITS CANDIDATES WOULD LIKELY HAVE PERFORMED *WORSE.*

But there was another major abnormality in the just-concluded campaign, as well. It was conducted in a year when national political attention was entirely absorbed by a single controversy: a spectacular scandal, over the course of which it was established beyond question that a sitting (Democratic) president had brazenly lied to the country—and had perjured himself both in civil litigation and before a criminal grand jury. It surely means something that the Republican party, especially given its already secured structural advantages in the nationwide top-to-bottom partisan order, has been unable to leverage Bill Clinton's unprecedented disgrace into larger GOP House and Senate majorities.

But it does not mean what Democrats and Republicans now say it means. They are weirdly agreed about "what went wrong" for the GOP. The Clinton White House and its various flunkies insist that Republicans made a critical mistake by focusing the election, with a late advertising campaign, on Monica Lewinsky and the pending impeachment inquiry. The GOP would have been much better off, this analysis

William Kristol is editor and publisher of The Weekly Standard, *and David Tell is its opinion editor.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goes, had it not gone silent on—and thus conceded to the Democrats—all those "real issues" that ordinary voters prefer their representatives to address. House Speaker Gingrich, for his part, disputes that his party did any such thing. Republicans, he contends, had a complete, non-Lewinsky "conservative reform" platform to offer the electorate. But Gingrich concurs that this message did not reach the voters, ignored as it was by a media "obsessed" with scandal, and that the GOP was wounded as a consequence.

Now, it is certainly the case that a great number of Americans, for reasons that do not flatter them, remain unprepared to reject a president who has committed multiple felonies right before their eyes. But it is not at all clear that they are eager to reject a Republican party that is still actively considering impeachment.

According to the exit polls, the Clinton scandal did not figure directly in most people's voting on November 3. In fact, the small sector of the electorate that did file a conscious "Lewinsky ballot" on Tuesday appears to have cast a slight majority of its votes *for* the GOP—and against the president and his party.

What does seem fairly clear from these and other current national polls is what would have happened on Tuesday if Republicans had in fact done what so many now suggest they should have done—what Gingrich claims they tried to do. Had the GOP decided to make the race a plain partisan choice between comprehensive legislative agendas, Contract with America-style, its candidates would very likely have performed *worse*. Because, across a wide range of issues that purportedly "matter," Republicans now find themselves at a serious disadvantage.

All the final pre-election surveys of national opinion are consistent on this score. On question after question, Democrats are preferred by gaping margins—by 20 percentage points or more on education, on Social Security, on Medicare, on health care, on "caring" about people, and on understanding "the needs and problems of families." The GOP has even lost its traditional and treasured edge on taxes.

It's not so much that American voters reject, in their practical details, the Republican policy prescriptions implied by such broad-brush issue labels. Quite the contrary: Voters more often than not enthusiastically embrace those same prescriptions when they are implemented by activist GOP governors and state legislatures. Even so, poll results this big—and this bad—cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. Nor can they be cured with the medicine best loved by political parties in a state of denial: a fresh set of focus-group-tested buzzwords and slogans.

Nationalized party-favorability numbers, collectively and issue-by-issue, generally reflect levels of voter confidence in each party's stewardship abilities. They constitute a summary judgment on the public face each party presents the country from Washington. The Republican face, put bluntly, has been too ugly for too long.

Since 1994, Americans have watched the GOP indulge itself in a sequence of blunders: the government shutdown; the hapless Dole presidential candidacy; the clumsy House coup attempt against Gingrich; the botched 1998 budget endgame with Clinton. At the same time, and of far more fundamental importance, Americans have watched a Republican party in crude and constant philosophical oscillation. One week, the congressional GOP flees its own stated principles in fear. The next week, it pretends to promote those principles simply by barking and growling at everyone who disagrees. Winning politics obliges a party simultaneously to reassure its faithful and earn converts by persuasion. The Republican congressional leadership, by contrast, has too often failed to achieve either goal, by failing at the most elemental task of a political party: to make a clear and intelligent argument on its own behalf.

There is one bright spot for the GOP in the latest opinion data. On one constellation of issues, Republicans maintain a powerful advantage over Democrats. For protecting "strong moral values" and preserving "higher ethical standards," Americans consider the Republicans a significantly better party. And this preference does have a real electoral effect. Morality and ethics were the second most commonly cited issue in Tuesday's exit polls, and the vast majority of voters who responded that moral concerns were crucial to their vote cast Republican ballots. Call it the "hidden Lewinsky factor."

Or call it social-issues conservatism—much derided as a Republican albatross, but still and always the core of the party's appeal. Of the two major political philosophies, conservatism imposes the much more stringent and difficult discipline on its would-be leaders. They must defend verities so long accepted that they are no longer fully understood. They must routinely explain why certain ideas are right or wrong, and why the distinctions matter. They must sometimes pursue projects that are at once wholly right and widely unpopular—like the impeachment of a president. And they must do it all with grace and wit, and confidence-inspiring gravity and calm.

This, alas, the present congressional Republican party has manifestly failed to do. A year from now, when the presidential campaign of 2000 takes center

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stage in the country's politics, new personalities will assume national GOP leadership. They will inherit what remains America's majority party, a party whose bedrock strength is its willingness directly to confront troublesome questions of public and private morality. It is something to look forward to. But a year is a very long time to wait. Ideas do not speak for themselves. Someone must step forward who is capable of making the case for conservative principle as the animating force of a governing Republican party. ♦

The Presidential Race Begins

By Fred Barnes

The 1998 election was about as good as it gets for George W. Bush. He was already the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, and his landslide reelection as governor of Texas strengthened his lead. Better yet, his brother Jeb was elected governor of Florida, which means George W. has all but locked up the third and fourth biggest states. He also showed his prowess as a vote-getter. By winning 69 percent of the vote, he far exceeded what any other Republican, and few Democrats, have achieved in Texas. Plus, he had coattails, pulling in the entire statewide GOP ticket and bringing Republicans to the brink of controlling both houses of the state legislature for the first time. And he got almost half of the Hispanic vote, no small feat for a Republican.

What's next for Bush? Not much as a national candidate. As front-runner—and with no one gaining on him—Bush has every reason to delay a formal candidacy and avoid attacks by rival candidates and intense press scrutiny. So, in the likely event that he runs, Bush won't announce until late next spring. In the meantime, he will appear at a meeting of Republican governors just before Thanksgiving. He won't deliver a major speech, though, hasn't scheduled other trips outside Texas, and doesn't plan to appear on national question-and-answer shows for the foreseeable future. Instead, he'll concentrate on pushing his program through the Texas legislature early in 1999.

Yet he wants to make an impression nationally, especially on conservatives. They're the dominant force in the GOP presidential nominating process, and Bush is eager to persuade them he's more conservative than his father, the former president. That's why he insisted in his election-night victory speech that his reelection was a triumph for his "conservative philosophy" and "a mandate for tax cuts." Bush believes his Texas agenda—a tax cut of nearly $3 billion and an end to social promotions in public schools—will appeal to conservatives. And he intends to spread the word quietly that prominent Republicans in his father's orbit—James Baker, Richard Darman, Rich Bond—won't be advising him. That should delight conservatives.

Bush does benefit from being President Bush's son. He's got name I.D., connections all over the country, and the experience of having worked in presidential campaigns. And there's an unusual way in which he's helped by his father. GOP strategist Jeff Bell calls it buyer's remorse. Polls have found that if the 1996 election were held again, President Clinton would still beat Bob Dole. But if the 1992 election were re-run, President Bush would be overwhelmingly reelected. Obviously, that's a strong nationwide statement that many voters feel they erred in ousting Bush and electing Clinton in 1992. This spills over into support for Bush's son now.

In his reelection drive, Bush matched the profile—the theoretical profile, that is—of a Republican who could win in 2000. He has a strong base and the ability to raise big money. He attracts Reagan Democrats and Hispanics. He's a conservative with compassion, or at least styles himself as such. He has charisma, having grown up in wide-open Texas rather than straitlaced Connecticut like his dad. He's acceptable to all segments of the Republican party. The result? He looks electable. Yet two things are missing. Bush lacks both a strong national message and a convincing game plan

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for winning the nomination.

So does the other Republican who got a lift (though not as much as Bush) on November 3—Sen. John McCain of Arizona. He was reelected with 69 percent of the vote and with 52 percent of the state's Hispanics. McCain, a POW in Vietnam, resembles Colin Powell in that he has an appeal across party lines. (Powell's made it clear he's not running.) But after siding with Clinton on campaign-finance reform and a large tobacco tax, McCain is sure to encounter resistance among GOP conservatives. Even so, he's no Clinton. Says GOP consultant Mike Murphy: "McCain is a lot of things Bill Clinton isn't. He's a hero with courage. Clinton is a coward. He's a blunt-spoken guy. Clinton is word-twister. He comes from the merit system of the military. Clinton rose in the spin and deception of conventional politics."

McCain will soon confer with advisers—ex-congressman Vin Weber, former Reagan aide Ken Duberstein, pollster Bill McInturff, Murphy—and decide by December 1 whether to run. Chances are, he won't. In fact, he likes Bush and may endorse him. But should McCain decide to seek the nomination, Murphy has a scenario for winning. He calls it the "big bounce." The idea is for McCain to wait for the press and Republican activists to tire of the GOP candidates, including Bush, by early next fall. Suddenly, McCain would announce, do well in Iowa, win New Hampshire, and be catapulted as a powerful front-runner into the later primaries. Sounds plausible—except McCain won't have much of a fund-raising base, and the Iowa caucuses usually require a year or more of organizing if a candidate is to finish in the top three. If McCain finished lower, he'd get no bounce.

But let's assume McCain does decide to run, performs okay in Iowa, and finishes first in New Hampshire. Then, the big bounce might work. To use a Democratic analogy, McCain would play Gary Hart to George W.'s Walter Mondale. Only this time, because of the way the primaries are scheduled, Hart would win. The California primary has been moved up to March 7, no more than two weeks after New Hampshire. Other primaries are set the same day. Bush would not have time to exploit his superior resources over the months-long haul of the primaries to wear down McCain, as Mondale did Hart in 1984. The race would be over in early March, with McCain the nominee.

Yes, yes, it's only a theory. But it's an intriguing one.

Broadly speaking, the Republican field consists of three types of candidate: governors or former governors, conservative ideologues, and celebrities. Bush, Lamar Alexander (who was once governor of Tennessee), and outgoing California governor Pete Wilson are of the first type. They're fairly conventional Republicans. The question is whether a Bush candidacy would steal the bulk of Alexander's support and deny Wilson an opening. At least in Iowa and New Hampshire, where Alexander was well organized when he ran in 1996, maybe not. Alexander has already run TV ads this year in New Hampshire, boosting his polls. Still, practically no Republican strategist believes Alexander or Wilson can defeat Bush (and neither do I).

> BROADLY SPEAKING, THE REPUBLICAN FIELD CONSISTS OF THREE TYPES OF CANDIDATE: GOVERNORS, IDEOLOGUES, AND CELEBRITIES

The ideologues—Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri, Gary Bauer, former vice president Dan Quayle, Steve Forbes, perhaps Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich—may have benefited from the timid posture of Republicans in the 1998 elections. They think so, anyway, if only because they have pointed messages. Forbes zinged Republican leaders for "passivity." "No message is no way to win an election," he said. "If you don't give people a reason to vote for you, don't be surprised if they don't."

He and Ashcroft have outlined in detail their positions on social and economic issues. Bauer, who runs the Family Research Council, gets credit for having championed (and funded to the tune of $25,000) the Alaska referendum that rejected same-sex marriage. As things stand now, Bauer will step down as FRC head in January, form an exploratory committee, and begin raising money. Forbes may beat him to the punch as a candidate. He intends to turn down matching federal funds, which will allow him to exceed spending limits.

The ideologues may fight one another in the Alaska and Louisiana caucuses before Iowa. In 1996, Pat Buchanan badly damaged Sen. Phil Gramm in those contests. This time, Quayle plans to go after the social-conservative bloc that Ashcroft and Bauer are also angling for. Quayle should not be underestimated. "He's famous and is a lot more popular with Republican voters than with the press," says Mike Murphy. Quayle has hired Kyle McSlarrow, a top Senate aide, as his campaign manager.

Given his war record, McCain belongs in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

celebrity category, along with Elizabeth Dole and John Kasich, chairman of the House Budget Committee. My guess is Dole won't run, though her allies have urged some GOP operatives not to jump on board with other candidates. Kasich has had a book ghost-written for him, *Courage Is Contagious*, designed to boost his candidacy. He told the *Washington Post* he's "a cutting-edge guy" who doesn't have to appeal to any particular niche in the Republican coalition. "The niche is me," he said. (Or, as Louis XIV might have said, *La niche, c'est moi*.)

The meaning of the 1998 election isn't likely to spark the first big debate among Republican presidential contenders. Impeachment is, especially if there's an effort to short-circuit the House inquiry and censure Clinton in some fashion instead. The ideologues are certain to object. As for the celebrities, who knows?

It will be George W. Bush whose opinion everyone will want to know. Whatever he says, even if he says nothing, he'll be attacked—which is the price of being the front-runner. ♦

A Party of Governors

By Michael Barone

It was an election about nothing, an election to determine the outcome of an issue—impeachment—about which few candidates had anything to say: That verdict has been voiced repeatedly over the last few weeks. But in fact, like most elections, this one was partly about government. And not so much the federal government in Washington, where deadlock between the parties seems likely to continue, as government at the state level, where real changes have been wrought in the 1990s, changes measured in lower taxes, shorter welfare rolls, and decreased crime.

These changes are wildly popular. Analysts attribute voters' positive attitudes about the direction of the nation and most politicians to the economy; and surely that is one factor. But welfare and crime are important, too. And they have been declining as steeply as they increased in the awful decade between 1965 and 1975, when welfare rolls and crime tripled. In the last five years, both have been cut by about one-third. These cuts have been almost entirely the work of state and local officials, mostly Republicans.

The result has been—with the conspicuous and important exception of California—a set of smashing victories for Republican governors. The most important victories may well be those that got the least notice on election-night broadcasts, because they were long expected and overwhelming. In big state after big state, the incumbent Republican governor had no serious opposition: George Pataki of New York, Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, John Engler of Michigan, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, Don Sundquist of Tennessee, and George W. Bush of Texas. Each first won office by a relatively narrow margin, in a state where Democrats had run serious candidates for many years. Each became so popular that he attracted no real competition. Even Pataki's opponent, Peter Vallone, though a serious officeholder, failed to run a serious campaign. Some of the other challengers—Geoffrey Fieger in Michigan and John J. Hooker Jr. in Al Gore's Tennessee—were an embarrassment.

Other victories deserve notice as well. In Connecticut, Gov. John Rowland's tax cuts produced a landslide over Democrat Barbara Kennelly. In Ohio, a lackluster Bob Taft succeeds two-term Republican governor George Voinovich, prolonging one party's control of the governorship beyond eight years for the first time in 99 years in often-pivotal Ohio. In Illinois, George Ryan exploited splits in the Democratic party to stretch the Republicans' hold on the governor's mansion past 22 years. In the race for governor of Minnesota, suburban mayor and former pro wrestler Jesse "the Body" Ventura and St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman held Democratic-Farmer-Labor nominee Hubert Humphrey III to under 30 percent of the vote—exactly 50 years after Humphrey's father won

Michael Barone is a senior staff editor at Reader's Digest *and co-author of* The Almanac of American Politics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

election to the Senate and became a national spokesman for Democratic liberalism.

These victories carry implications for the future of American politics. One is that the Democratic party, should it lose control of the Lincoln Bedroom, has little institutional strength. Where it has strong candidates it can win impressive victories. But where it does not, it can implode. Second, and more important, Tuesday's gubernatorial victories show that Republicans elected by narrow margins and championing policies attacked by Democrats and editorial writers can build a consensus when they put those policies into effect. Examples: Pataki and tax cuts, Engler and welfare and education reform, Thompson and welfare reform, Sundquist and tax cuts, Bush and tort reform and welfare reform. Even the editorial writers ended up endorsing them. In state after state, there is a consensus on public policy, forged by once-controversial Republicans, which is considerably to the right of the consensus Bill Clinton has hoped to forge nationally.

What about the Democrats' wins in South Carolina and Alabama? They can both be attributed to the popularity of outgoing Georgia Democratic governor Zell Miller's lottery, whose proceeds pay for college scholarships. Interestingly, this is an economically regressive plan: Lottery players are mostly low income, and scholarship winners tend to come from middle and upper-income households. But the plan's popularity is proof that voters are less interested in progressive taxation than in rewarding students' merit. That is encouraging for Republicans as well as New Democrats.

And what about California, where Republican governor Pete Wilson is term limited? Dan Lungren, the Republican candidate, spent most of his fall advertising funds on crime, hoping to establish that Democrat Gray Davis was as much of a squish as his boss of 20 years ago, Jerry Brown. But Davis was too smart to let that label stick. Meanwhile, Lungren had relatively little to say about education. Over the last 25 years, while Democrats allied with teacher unions, the schools of education, and Sacramento bureaucrats have had custody of California's public schools, test scores have sent the state plunging from the top 10 in the nation to number 49. But it was Davis who emphasized education reform, with a serious program crafted to be minimally unacceptable to the teacher unions. The result proves not that California voters are unready for radical change, but that the Republican nominee was uninterested in providing it.

The lesson for 2000 is clear. Republicans should not be afraid of championing radical reform. Voters want reform, even radical reform, of governmental institutions that aren't working, but reform that is conciliatory, not confrontational in tone. ♦

The Armies of the Right

By Andrew Ferguson

I'm not an expert in these matters, but here's my guess. Historians of the future will date the demise of conservatism in America to the summer of 1996, when it was revealed that the Clinton White House had obtained the secret FBI files of several hundred Republican politicos.

In the era of the New Democrat we're used to seeing liberals act like conservatives, but that summer was the moment at which conservatives decided to act like liberals. The injured Republicans organized and spoke of "empowering themselves." They claimed victim status in outraged letters to the editor. They complained loudly about their constitutional rights. There were petitions, and proclamations, and press conferences where nostrils flared and eyes flashed fire. They gathered for a protest rally in front of the White House—with bullhorns! And to seal their conversion they engaged a "public interest" law firm to file a class-action lawsuit on their beleaguered behalf. Overnight they had become Ralph Nader.

The only thing missing was the last desperate signal of sentimental victimhood: little pastel ribbons, folded and pinned to the lapel, to show solidarity for . . . oh, I don't know what they would have shown sol-

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idarity for. But the important thing, from a historian's perspective, is that now, in late 1998, this oversight has been corrected. At long last conservatives are wearing lapel ribbons. The color is peach, to signify the wearer's support for President Clinton's impeachment, and I saw hundreds of them last Saturday at a "March for Justice" on the national Mall, where a crowd of citizens gathered, as the press release put it, "to demand Clinton's removal from office."

AP/Wide World Photos

Loudly "demanding" and ostentatiously "marching" for ineffable "justice" used to be the unique vocation of the Left—people on the right being otherwise engaged in things like going to work and earning a living. The sponsor of the March for Justice, however, boasts an impeccably right-wing pedigree. The rally was organized by an Internet Web site called Free Republic, which over the last couple of years has become the cybersalon of any enthusiast interested in the mysterious deaths of Vincent Foster, Jim McDougal, and Ron Brown, the mysterious conflagration at Waco, the mysterious murder of Mrs. Randy Weaver, the abrupt ending of the American way of life with Y2K, the mysterious crash of TWA 800, the unexplained castration of Buddy the presidential pup, and now—as a logical culmination of all these interrelated matters—the impeachment of Bill Clinton.

Who were the marchers exactly? Well, as the rally opened they were led in singing the national anthem by a person called "Muffaletta Man," if that gives you some idea. Fanned out before a stage set up at the base of the Washington Monument, there was a large contingent of bikers and more than one dead ringer for the late nine-fingered guitarist Jerry Garcia; many cheerful oldsters in lawn chairs; two couples in fright wigs and many more in Clinton masks; countless yuppies in Lands' End and Polo; a black guy; a man dressed up like a cigar (with Monica Nudo printed on the cigar band around his waist) and another in a chicken outfit; several veterans in fatigues and one in full George S. Patton regalia. Jim Robinson, the founder of Free Republic, summed it up in a speech from the stage: "*We* are the American people," he said. In all, there were a couple thousand of the American people in attendance—fewer than the 4,000 the organizers claimed, but many more than the hundred or so who had gathered on the mall a week before in a rival rally to show support for President Clinton.

And this should come as no surprise. With the executive branch under enemy occupation, conservatives have mastered the arts of liberal protest and made them their own. At the March for Justice they submerged themselves in group chanting—"Impeach Indict Convict! Impeach Indict Convict!"—and carried signs fashioned with great care and imagination. "FIRE THE LIAR." "CLINTON'S LIES ARE AS SLIPPERY AS A WHITE HOUSE CIGAR." "MY PRESIDENT SLEPT WITH YOUR HONOR STUDENT." "GO BACK TO CHINA YOU COMMUNIST BASTARD." Back at the edge of the crowd I came across a pair of sign-waving old ladies, neither of whom could have been a day under 75. "HILLARY—BILL SAYS YOU ARE A LESBIAN," read one placard; the other, more simply: "CLINTON SUCKS." (My, what big signs you have, Grandma!)

More important, the reformed conservatives have their own leaders—their celebrities and stars. For incandescence and self-validation left-wing protesters can usually count on movie actors like Glenn Close

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Martin Sheen and some combination of Baldwin siblings. But right-wingers must bask in the glow of rather lesser luminaries. Behind the stage was a VIP tent, safely roped off from the admiring hordes, who clustered together and craned their necks and clutched pen and paper in hopes of getting a glimpse of, or maybe an autograph from—well, let's see—there was Gary Aldrich, a retired FBI agent, and Lucianne Goldberg, who was Maurice Stans's literary representative, and Alan Keyes, the former vice president (so his résumé claims) of the Ronald Reagan Alumni Association, at least four self-identified radio talk-show hosts, and a woman named Ann Coulter, who has made multiple appearances on CNBC and who spent much of the afternoon wearing sunglasses and ignoring the solicitations of a handful of gangly young men with acne. She wore tight pants.

All the celebrities spoke, of course, and the remarks of each were greeted with the same thunderous enthusiasm, notwithstanding that they were often mutually contradictory. On this matter of the American people, for example: Many celeb-speakers agreed with Jim Robinson that the "liberal media is a liar. There's no way 70 percent of the American people want this man to remain in office," which is how he knew that "we are the American people." Others took a darker view. L.D. Brown, an ex-Arkansas state trooper who no longer likes his former boss, said he was thinking of moving to England: "I'm so disgusted with the American people." Keyes pointedly questioned the "moral character of the American people." And Larry Klayman, the hyperlitigious "public interest" lawyer who launched the lawsuit in the FBI-files case, was even gloomier.

"The polls are correct," Mr. Wet Blanket told the crowd. "We are only 30 percent. Seventy percent of the American people fail to appreciate" the country's founding principles. "The rest of the American people are lost," Klayman went on, "worshipping the Golden Calf." But there's hope! Like Moses, he said, he would volunteer to "bring down the Ten Commandments and teach them right from wrong." He stood on the stage tight-lipped and immobile, as the waves of applause and adulation washed over him.

There are other, less pressing matters of dispute—Brown, for example, announced that Hillary Clinton and Vince Foster had had an affair, which must be problematic for the Hillary-is-a-lesbian theorists. But these are easily ironed out in deference to a shared, consuming conviction. And here too our contemporary right-wingers have learned from their left-wing precursors: They are united, motivated, and gassed up generally by a delicious, delirious contempt. For all that, though, our conservative and liberal activists are not yet completely interchangeable. "Remember," one woman shouted from the stage as the rally ended, "be sure to pick up your trash. We're conservatives and we clean up after ourselves." And sure enough, an hour later the place was spotless, as though they had never been there. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT NEXT?

The Triumph of Clintonism

By David Frum

There's no blinking the truth: Campaign '98 was not only a bad Republican defeat, it was a personal triumph for the president. Some happy-talk Republicans will want of course to deny the magnitude of the president's victory. They will point to the exit polls showing that voters still disapprove of his character; they will argue (as Newt Gingrich has) that the media are willfully ignoring the big news of a third consecutive Republican House majority; or perhaps (like Senate majority leader Trent Lott) they will repeat post-election the Democratic pre-election spin that the '98 results were the product of hundreds of local races rather than one big national campaign.

Well, phooey. Throughout the campaign, the Democratic party made clear that a vote for them was a vote to let the president off scot-free. (At this writing, the Democratic ads are still posted at the party's Web site, www.democrats.org.) The ritualized condemnations of the president's "inappropriate" behavior that congressional Democrats unhappily summoned up in August were nowhere to be heard in October. They nailed their colors to the mast. "All Republicans talk about are investigations," an actress complained in one radio spot. "They are obsessed with getting rid of the president. There is one way to stop this." "Yeah," replies a second female voice. "It's time to get rid of those Republicans." The last round of Democratic national television ads put the message even more bluntly. Against a background of the Capitol dome, the ads intoned, "This is no ordinary time. Republicans have made removing the president from office their top priority. Vote Democratic and tell Congress we're ready to move on."

The Democrats offered the voters the promise of 100,000 new unionized public-school teachers and the abolition of the laws of arithmetic insofar as they apply to Social Security. All they asked in return was that the voters overlook the multiple perjuries and other crimes of the party leader, and vote for one of his local henchmen. And the American public took the deal—or at any rate enough of them did to break with the ancient sixth-year curse (according to which the president's party loses congressional seats during his second term).

The president and the Democrats achieved this notwithstanding a Republican ad campaign intended to reassure voters that they too meant Clinton no real harm. The idea that the Republicans were a party of sex-crazed investigators—an idea we'll be hearing a lot of over the next few days—is almost delusional in its revisionism. Whatever one thinks of Kenneth Starr, the Republican congressional party looked on the Lewinsky scandal with about as much appetite as a French parliamentary delegation encountering its first dish of Senate bean soup. Throughout 1998, the Republican leadership in Congress ducked and squirmed and prayed—both silently and out loud—that the scandal would somehow go away on its own, perhaps through a quick and tidy presidential resignation in the wake of the Starr report, perhaps through one of the apology-censure deals broached by Sen. Orrin Hatch or Gerald Ford. Republican congressmen are human, after all, and they very understandably wanted to be spared the embarrassment of talking about so squalid a scandal on national television. They were human, too, in being sensitive to the likelihood that the famously vindictive Clinton White House would pry into the personal lives of its opponents to convince the public that the president should be excused because, after all, "everybody does it."

> POLITICS IS OF COURSE ABOUT DEALS. CLINTONISM HOLDS THAT LAW AND JUSTICE ARE ABOUT DEALS, TOO.

It was not the congressional Republicans but the media—unable to stomach an endless diet of lies from the president and the White House—that drove this scandal, and it was conservative activists and not the local Republican parties who responded to it. Until the very last week of the campaign, national Republican ads made scant reference to the Lewinsky scandal, and all but a handful of individual campaigns shunned it altogether. Only at the end did the Republicans raise the matter, and then in the most gingerly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way. "In every election there is one big question to think about," began a television ad over black-and-white footage of voters lining up at an old-fashioned booth. "This year, it's, Should we reward Bill Clinton? Should we reward not telling the truth? Reward Bill Clinton or vote Republican."

No Republican ad mentioned the impeachment inquiry voted in the past session of Congress, although plenty found time to mention the apparently much more noteworthy micro-regulations in the Republican version of the Patient Bill of Rights. And all the ads that did touch on the scandal were careful to make plain the Republican belief that an enlarged Republican majority would in itself constitute full and sufficient punishment for the president. "Republicans are the balance we need," spot after spot concluded. But of course, you don't balance somebody you intend to remove from office. If the mission of the 106th Congress was to "balance" Clinton, that clearly implied that Clinton would still be sitting on his end of the teeter-totter as long as Congress sat on its.

Peter Steiner

The Republican strategy yielded abject failure; the Democrats' succeeded. The losers will now take part in the ritualized debate over whether they lost because they went too far or because they didn't go far enough. But before that debate begins, it's worth pausing to consider how it is that the Democrats and Republicans came to enter the 1998 campaign with the Monica positions they held.

It is quite incredible, at least for those with a sense of history, that the Democrats decided to fight the election as rank apologists for the president. This used to be, after all, the party that was always viewing-with-alarm the specter of presidential lawlessness; it used to be the party of moral outrage over men who "just don't get it"—men like the senator who put the moves on women who worked for him or the Supreme Court nominee who was accused of talking dirty. As recently as August, Joseph Lieberman gave the old act one last grand performance on the floor of the Senate, denouncing the president's "immorality." But that all went poof in the past campaign. The party of Archibald Cox and Anthony Lewis, of the furrowed brow and the excruciating constitutional scruple, suddenly morphed into the party of Johnnie Cochran: If Starr's a twit, you must acquit. The desire to win will cause people to do all sorts of strange things. But this?

Yes, even this. Despite the Democrats' good day on Tuesday, the party remains a deeply, deeply troubled institution. Its unrivaled grip on state legislatures—a basic fact of American politics a generation ago—has been broken. A reliably liberal federal judiciary is reliable no more. Those governors who aren't Republicans do their very best to sound as if they are. The Democratic monopoly on Congress has yielded to a new reality in which Republicans are competitive in the House and dominant in the Senate. Even the support of the national media, which for decades pampered the Democratic party, can no longer be taken for granted. The Democrats entered this election cycle with really only one last big asset: the White House. So long as they had that, they remained—despite all their other losses—the party in power, with all that that implies for their ability to deliver favors to their friends and raise money in return. Without the White House, what would the Democrats of 2000 be? A broken, shriveled, financially distressed party. Republicans are used to this kind of adversity: They suffered it in 1992-94, in 1974-80, and before that in 1960-68. But the Democrats had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known nothing like it for decades, and the prospect of it must have seemed not only terrifying but outrageous to them.

And they were therefore prepared to pay almost any price to avoid that fate: even as high a price as defending without a visible flicker of conscience a perjurious president, his indicted cabinet officers, and his absconded Chinese financial backers. They knew that if Clinton could keep the cops at bay, he just might be able to pass on the presidency to Al Gore in 2000, saving the party from banishment to the margins of American life. They knew, too, that if Clinton were forced out, it was extremely unlikely that Gore could survive the wreck. So the fight over Clinton was a fight for the survival of the Democratic party as something like an equal force in American politics—and fights like that are waged without scruple or restraint.

It could be said that the Democrats really had no choice. But what about the Republicans? Certainly they had a choice over whether to go to the country with a record of legislative achievement. They chose not to pass a tax cut, chose not to seize on the president's State of the Union plea to save Social Security as an invitation to go to work on a personal-retirement-account system, chose finally to bust the budget in the closing weeks of Congress.

About the Monica matter, however, they too had a path before them that left them little choice. There seems to be a mood about Washington this week that Congress can have proof of presidential criminality shoved under its nose and look away if the stock market is rising. Yet the evidence of Clinton's crimes was not gathered by Congress; it was presented to Congress as a result of a legal mechanism, the independent counsel, that the president demanded. Congress had only two options before it: either permit Bill Clinton to make himself the first chief executive in the republic's history to brazenly violate the laws protecting the integrity of judicial proceedings in the full light of day or apply the constitutionally prescribed remedy to a man presiding over a stock market that roared upward nearly 1,000 points in the month before Election Day.

These were, Republican leaders apparently felt, two bad options. So they chose to try to finesse them, just as they tried to finesse the budget. They called on the public to punish Clinton—without ever explaining in their ads why punishment was called for; they warned that Democrats would try to shut down their investigations—while emitting their own pitiful whimpers of eagerness to be rid of the whole mess. It was a very striking sign of how sick they were of the business that they could watch the president of the United States effectively negotiate in public for almost a month with indicted tax evader Abe Hirschfeld for a $1 million personal gratuity to Paula Jones to help Clinton wriggle out of his legal troubles, without even a squeak of congressional protest.

In the very short run, the Republicans' decision has brought the party only grief, and the Democrats have won a triumph. But over the longer term, it's not clear that either party will really benefit from the results of 1998. For the Democrats, it's worth remembering—funny though it seems now—that the great accomplishment of Bill Clinton in 1992 was to free them both from the Acid-Amnesty-Abortion legacy of George McGovern and the sniffish superiority of Adlai Stevenson and Eugene McCarthy. Clinton brilliantly repackaged the Democrats as a party that honored work, faith, responsibility, and family; a party that an ordinary person could belong to without shame.

All that has now gone with the wind. The faculty radicals, Hollywood artistes, and *New Yorker* contributors that Bill Clinton locked in the party basement six years ago have now been set free, to take to the airwaves and the glossy magazines to denounce the idea that anyone might ever be permitted to make a moral judgment about anything except smoking. Clinton gained the Democratic nomination by promising to free the party from its thralldom to the values of Barney Frank, Jesse Jackson, and Patricia Ireland; now, in order to excuse the boss's vices, the party is more deeply committed to those values than ever.

But the Republicans, too, have been tarnished by the campaign they have just finished. A few weeks ago, an article in a liberal magazine complained that there is as yet no such thing as a philosophy of "Clintonism," in the sense that there is such a thing as "Reaganism" or "Jeffersonianism." Alas, this complaint is mistaken. There is indeed such a thing as Clintonism—it just doesn't happen to be a philosophy. It describes a style of politics, a style characterized by slavish poll-reading and shameless lying. It describes too a mode of governing characterized by the ducking of responsibility and the prostitution of the powers of the state to the shabbiest sort of personal advantage.

Politics, of course, is about deals; Clintonism believes that law and justice are about deals, too. Clintonism is a disease, not a belief. Unfortunately, Republicans are no more immune to it than Democrats. In attempting to wring political advantage from the Lewinsky scandal—in attempting to use it to enlarge their congressional majority while simultaneously failing to argue its real seriousness—the Republicans con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vinced the public that the matter was for them nothing more than a partisan device, which would be turned off as soon as it ceased to be convenient.

And in fact, in the election's aftermath, it has ceased to be convenient. It is extremely unlikely that we will hear very much more about it from the leaders of the Republican party. The president has confessed to crimes; the Congress is now almost certain to let him off the hook. If it does so, the Lewinsky matter will indeed recede into history. But the bridge to the twenty-first century that the president keeps promising will be built at the end of a very crooked road. ♦

A Nation of Consenting Adults

By Harvey Mansfield

The election was about sex even if it wasn't. It wasn't, because the Republicans failed to make an issue of President Clinton's escapades. They were following the polls, and in keeping with the idea behind the independent-counsel statute, they were letting Kenneth Starr do their work for them. It was only Democrats, though few of them (such as Charles Schumer in New York), who made sex an issue—against intrusive Republicans.

In the event, the Republicans were caught in a classic half-measure. They were far enough committed to be exposed to blame, but they did not go far enough to have an effect.

Yet the election was about sex because the American people gave Clinton a pass. They did not make an issue of his misconduct; they silently consented to it. Our mostly issueless election was between consenting adults in politics, and what they consented to was the doctrine of consenting adults in sex. Silent consent is easier than making an issue; it comes and goes without involvement, commitment, or responsibility. Even in government by consent, we consent to the most important things silently.

When the Republicans failed to make an issue of Clinton, *they* gave him a pass. Morality always has to make an issue of itself. Morality is about praise and blame, and it cannot afford to fall silent because silence is abdication, and abdication is consent. The Republicans kept waiting for the morality of ordinary Americans to appear, and to give the presumptuous cad Clinton a mighty swipe. But they feared appealing to morality. Having taken the easy way out themselves, they should not be surprised that the American people did the same.

Not to make an issue of sex is to leave it in the private sphere, where it becomes a matter of private choice unsupervised by public authority. Our liberal democracy rests on the distinction between private and public, which means that the public is meant to serve the private, our common life protecting our individual rights. Even our public debates are about how to privatize our lives: The abortion question, for example, is whether fetuses should be safe or mothers should be sovereign. Our issues are about how to render our politics issueless.

Both parties try to privatize the economy, the Republicans by leaving it to the market and the Democrats in a manner not so obvious. They want the government to guarantee security through entitlements that go to private individuals. Such entitlements increase the size of government but, paradoxically, reduce the scope of the public. They do so by attempting to fix the expectations of beneficiaries on permanent, noncontroversial benefits and thus remove entitlement programs from the field of combat as political issues. Not the market but bureaucracy takes over from partisan politics. As FDR once said of his New Deal, "The day of enlightened administration has arrived."

Of course, the issues survive somehow. We argue about the right to life versus choice, and the market versus bureaucracy. We argue over the formulas for removing argument from politics. In the case of sex, the argument has been going on for quite a while—since 1957, if not before.

Harvey Mansfield is professor of government at Harvard University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The formula used on behalf of Clinton refers to "consenting adults": No questions asked about sex between consenting adults. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, that phrase dates from the Wolfenden Report of 1957 in England on the attitude of government toward homosexuality. The report concluded: "We accordingly recommend that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence."

Here was a great advance in toleration for homosexuals, who were no longer to be hounded by the law. Henceforth they would be much less exposed to blackmail or driven to suicide. But look at what has happened since. The doctrine of consenting adults has been expanded to include heterosexuals, who are not as such in distress or subject to prejudice or in violation of the law.

Heterosexuals are often married; so a spouse, a third party, is involved when a married person has a liaison. Is the spouse's consent to be invited? Obviously not. And with heterosexuals, children may be around. The phrase "consenting adults" applied to homosexuals denies legitimacy to homosexual behavior by those not of age, but when applied to heterosexuals, it does the opposite: It denies legitimacy to the interests of children. And what about the qualification "in private," which is now omitted from the formula? Now it has become the duty of the public to avert its gaze from sex between consenting adults, replacing the duty of the parties involved to be discreet, stay private, and not get caught.

ABOVE ALL, THOSE WHO ARE TO BE TOLERANT ARE NOW EXPECTED TO WIPE AWAY THEIR FROWNS AND ADOPT A MELLOW ATTITUDE.

Above all, those who are to be tolerant of consenting adults are now expected to wipe away their frowns and adopt a mellow attitude. The Wolfenden Report, a liberal document in its time, said on its first page: "Prostitution and homosexuality rank high in the kingdom of evils." Amazing! Today this would be regarded as proof of intolerance. But today the tolerant are expected not merely to tolerate evil but also to stop thinking of it as evil. You are not tolerant, we think, if you can be accused of "homophobia" (a phony clinical term invented to awe the ignorant and put an end to argument).

Of course a single phrase sent across the ocean to us by our revered mother country would have had little effect here if it had not ridden to power with our home-grown sexual revolution. We cannot much blame the Wolfenden Report for the way it has been misinterpreted today. Still, there's a connection between the original and our imitation. The doctrine of consenting adults, originally targeted to the proclivities of one group, is now generalized to all and extended to every practice that might gain the consent of an adult. In its logic the doctrine denies any reason why one should not consent, and in particular, denies any relation between sex and shame. This is the idea to which the American people have been led by their president to consent.

Yet things have not gone so far, one could say. Almost everyone still feels obliged to repeat that what President Clinton did is wrong or deplorable or at least "inappropriate," as he admitted. But most people add, and in the election they made clear, that his misconduct does not rise to the level required for impeachment, even when combined with lying. So they want to "move on." To move on means not to make an issue of it. It means lowering the standard as to sex and lying both.

The president is an accomplished liar in a certain sense. No one who saw the videotape of his grand-jury testimony could fail to be impressed by his artistry. It is not that he appears trustworthy; you know he's lying. But you can't catch him at it, or, like the frustrated Republicans, you watch him getting away with lying to others. His kind of lying depends on being in a context where lying is expected and cleverness is admired. When his kind of lying goes unopposed, and is not made an issue of, it helps to create and confirm the context in which it thrives. Some might call the context a growing maturity in the American people. Others would more reasonably call it corruption.

So there is a general tendency in our liberal politics to privatize the issues, to remove them from public argument. Not to make an issue of something is just what toleration means. But toleration has a general tendency too, that goes from withholding punishment while disapproving to giving approval after forsaking censure—from frown to smile. The president's strong job-approval rating is distinct from his moral standing, but in a sense they are together precisely because of the difference. Job approval has been drained of its moral content with regard to sex and diminished as to lying. Toleration is not neutral. Whatever is tolerated in our politics tends to gain ground as the exercise of a right. If we don't keep up the standard of morality we will bring it down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Already those who defend the president have felt obliged to demean and defame other presidents to make their false point that everybody does it.

Soon we are likely to think that there was little or nothing to deplore in the president's misconduct. Not to be impeached will be a victory for him; victory brings vindication; and with vindication comes absolution—nay, a certain admiration. What a man! In his shallow, ambitious soul, President Clinton combines the sensitive male wished for by feminists and the lowdown reaction to that type. Women sympathize with him, and males chuckle. What a rogue!

Taking sex out of politics will not focus more attention on the issues. In the first place, it is impossible to remove shame from sex. Never mind why, but the consequence is that sex will always be interesting: Count on that. It will particularly interest the sixties generation, and those of their successors for whom sexual liberation goes with inordinate honesty in self-expression. Those inspired by these kindred ideals are always on the lookout for lying and hypocrisy. They don't believe in truth, but they do believe in truth to oneself. Such people have a big appetite for scandal.

Beyond this circumstance lies a more general fact about our politics. To the extent that Americans distrust government and dislike politicians they are drawn to a politics of scandal. Such feeling is strongest among libertarians, but it can be found among other Republicans and Democrats too, for whom independence and vigilance are prized qualities. The nonpartisan "moderation" so much praised by statesmanlike pundits arises less from prudent reflection on the common good than from the habit of asking, What's in it for me? That attitude is averse to raising issues, an activity that requires one to think about someone besides oneself.

To raise an issue is to offer a general prescription for ruling: It reflects a desire to rule, not the wish to be let alone. The wish to be let alone is what leads people to seek little more than entertainment from politics. It's not that scandal breeds disinterest in politics as people become disgusted, but rather the reverse—disinterest breeds scandal. All the mud our citizens watch being flung about does not shock them so much as confirm them in their belief that they can trust only themselves.

Our liberal politics alternates between privatizing issues and ruling. The first tendency is dominant, but the second is never suppressed. Although we are always seeking to settle our issues, we are also always arguing about how to do so. The tension between ruling and privatizing can be found in all parties and nonparties, but it is especially acute today among Republicans, who cannot decide between diminishing government (privatizing) and devolving it (ruling in a different way from the Democrats).

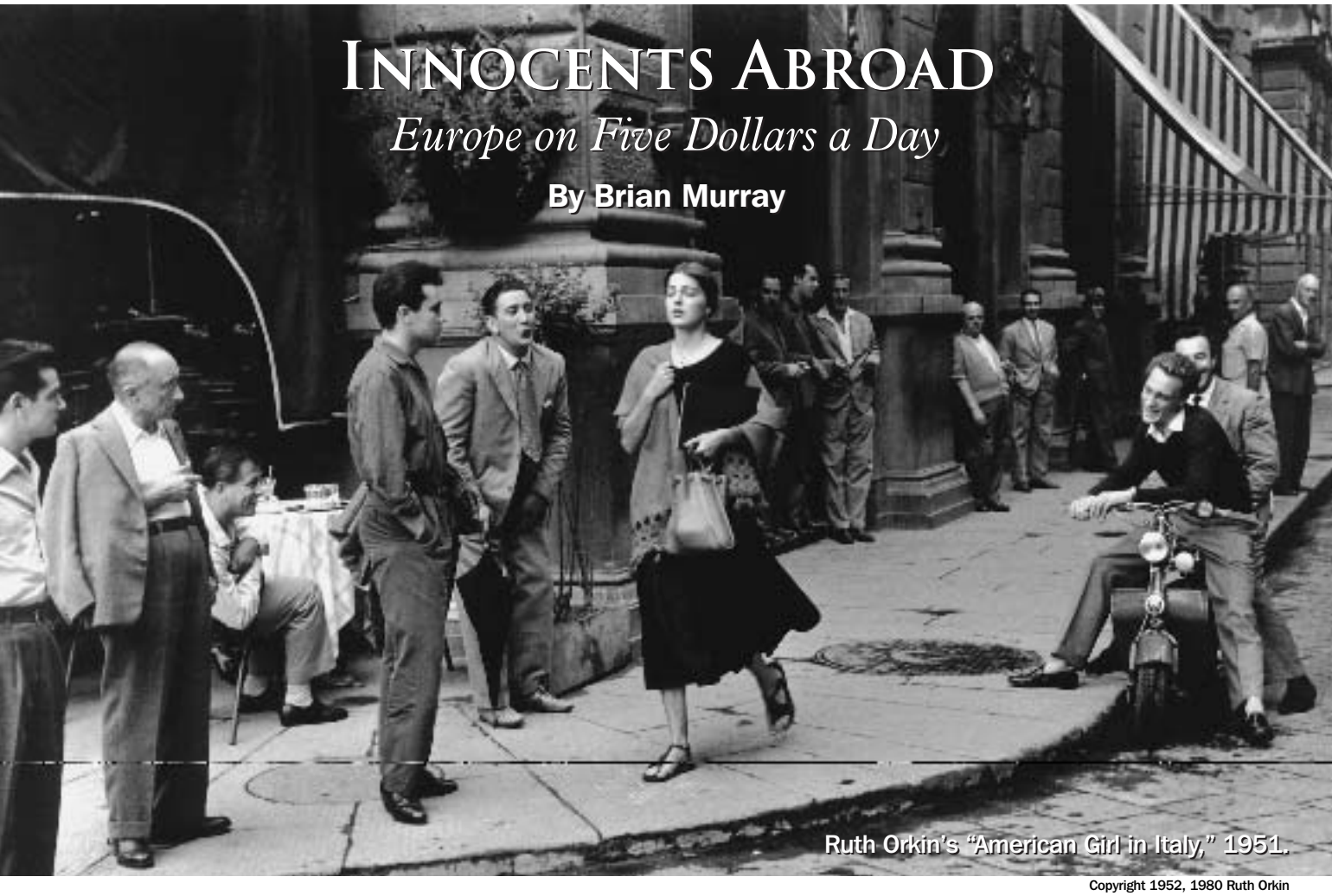
Even while evading the question of sex, the election confirms that it is an issue between the parties. The Democrats, having taken their stand with Bill Clinton, are the party of moral laxity, and the Republicans are the party of moral—what? Not moral courage, not this time. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Innocents Abroad

Europe on Five Dollars a Day

By Brian Murray



Ruth Orkin's "American Girl in Italy," 1951.

Copyright 1952, 1980 Ruth Orkin

In 1936, Eugene Fodor published *On the Continent*, the first book-length travel guide to bear his name. Subtitled "the entertaining travel annual," *On the Continent* covered Europe from Portugal to Turkey, offering neither pictures nor maps, just relaxed advice and lively prose.

The book remains a delight to read, a charming look at decorum and diversion in a world now largely gone. In Holland, we learn, courtesy "demands that men should greet each other by raising their hats." In Sweden, a gentleman "always walks on the lady's left." In Spain, foreigners are urged not to be "too enterprising with the exquisitely graceful and alluring daughters of Spain," for "there may be a stiletto lurking in the background." And for that "vast mass of people who are in need of real change but must watch the cost," *On the Continent* offered this emphatic advice: "Jugoslavia." Here, notes the guidebook (quoting George Bernard Shaw), "the people are everything you imagine yourself to be, and are not. They are hospitable, good humored, and very good looking. Every town is a picture and every girl a movie star."

Of course, nowadays—thirty years after the jumbo jet—world tourism is not what it used to be. For ever-growing numbers of Americans, Europe isn't a romantically far-flung locale; it's where you go to conduct business or to spend your junior year abroad. During summer's high season, the continent is lined with tourists from the Costa del Sol to the Amalfi Coast. "We are," as Arthur Frommer proclaims, "the first generation in human history to be able to travel to other continents as easily as we once took a trolley to the next town."

Frommer himself entered the travel-handbook market in the mid-1950s with *Europe on Five Dollars a Day*—in its way, one of the most influential books of the postwar years. Hugely popular and widely imitated, Frommer's first tourbooks helped convince a new generation of honeymooners and holiday-makers that they needn't settle for Yellowstone or Niagara Falls when—for relatively little more—

Brian Murray teaches writing at Loyola College in Baltimore.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they could cross the ocean and tour the world. And as tourism boomed, so did the guidebook industry. In 1996, the *New York Times* estimated the domestic market for such publications at $200 million a year.

Of course, in some ways, guidebooks to Europe haven't changed all that much since the dawning of the jet age. They still list the same grand sights and many of the same hotels. But the current versions are glossier than they used to be, bigger as a rule, and over-packed with advice. *The Complete Idiot's Travel Guide to Planning Your Trip to Europe* is, for example, as hefty as the Boston Yellow Pages, and could double as a dumbbell for those wishing to work their biceps while strolling the Champs Elysées. But then, in the Information Age, less is rarely taken to be more.

Fodor's *On the Continent* assumed a certain resourcefulness in its readers, urging them to drop their tourbooks occasionally, allowing "chance and the mood of the moment to direct you." The aptly named *Idiot's Guide*, however, promises a "no-brainer" approach, and "easy to follow advice that guides you every step of the way." Its author, Reid Bramblett, even supplies detailed itineraries covering virtually every hour of a two- or three-week stay. Bramblett is a self-described "advance man" who, while "cris-crossing the continent" pen in hand, has "already made mistakes—and learned from them—so that you don't have to." "Heck," he crows, "I'll even help you pack!"

Bramblett has already endured what he calls the greatest "culture shock" facing Americans visiting Europe—the bathroom. "It all starts in your first cheap *pension*," he warns, "when you discover that the only bathroom is down the hall, coed, and shared by everyone on the floor." There's more: European hoteliers can be pretty miserly when it comes to filling the hot water tank; and, as Bramblett warns, "hot water may be available only once a day and not on demand." The shrewd Yank thus asks—presumably in a booming voice—"When hot water?" as soon as he checks in.

There are other jolts, as well. Europeans, Bramblett advises, "don't make a habit of wearing their regional traditional costume": alas, no lederhosen or kilts. Still, "most European males, especially those in southern countries," do "act like peacocks around women, parading around to win admiration." Bramblett's research has prompted him to conclude that "a single woman or a group made up of women only will get approached more often than a man or mixed group." So what's a girl to do? "Dress modestly to avoid unwanted attention," he counsels. "And wear shades."

LET'S GO IS THE BEST GUIDE TO USE WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN HELSINKI LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO TANGO.

Like Bramblett, the tourbook writer Rick Steves assumes a chatty but knowing scoutmaster's tone and seems similarly prepared to take your trip for you. With his "sixth sense of what tickles a reader's fancy," Steves has already sifted "through mountains of time-sapping alternatives" in order to "present you with only the best." With *Rick Steves' Best of Europe*, a trip to the continent can be as adventurous as punching the buttons on the remote control. See Dublin, for instance, the Steves way: "10:30, Trinity College walk; 11:00, Book of Kells and Old Library; 12:00, Browse Grafton Street, lunch there or picnic on St. Steven's Green; 13:30, National Museum"—and so on, through every minute of something like a European holiday programmed by Martha Stewart.

Indeed, like Martha Stewart, Steves now presides over a thriving industry of products bearing his name. He hosts the PBS series *Travels in Europe with Rick Steves*. He publishes a newsletter offering "fresh-from-the-rucksack travel tips." He also produces a series of pocket-size phrase books and dictionaries that "cover every situation a traveler is likely to encounter"—including, in the German version, the always handy *Glauben Sie an Leben im Weltall?* ("Do you believe in extraterrestrial life?) and *Darf ich dir den massieren?* ("Would you like a massage?")—the modern equivalent, perhaps, of the much-mocked eighteenth-century phrasebook that included a translation for "My postillion has been struck by lightning." Steves assumes the air of having no airs, the persona of a regular guy who, despite his extensive knowledge of castles and strudel, still remains an American innocent abroad. When he first visited that "living, breathing organism," London, Steves humbly admits, "I felt very, very small."

But he's returned many times since and acquired some piercing insights into culture and art. ("Medieval art was OK if it embellished the house of God and told Bible stories.") He's also grasped the finer points of European convention and thus helpfully suggests that while in Venice ("worth at least a day") men should, literally, "keep their shirts on."

He's discovered, too, that in many cities pigeon guano poses a threat to unsuspecting excursionists. But when the birds do make their mark, you should "resist the initial response to wipe it off immediately—it'll just smear into your hair. Wait until it dries and flake it off cleanly." Don't make a habit of waiting, however: "Your trip," Steves computes, "costs at least $10 per waking hour."

To his credit, Steves also commends two much better guidebooks, *Let's Go: Europe 1998* and the *Michelin*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Green Guide Europe. As it has been since 1961, *Let's Go* is still aimed primarily at the legions of backpacking students who haunt Europe's train stations and town squares during the summer months. Its tone is informal, but not condescending. Its contributors, students themselves, don't start by assuming that their readers are half-wits who wouldn't know a museum from a mausoleum.

Let's Go, indeed, has many virtues. It lists useful phone numbers: hotels, consulates, embassies. And it's impressively inclusive, giving space to both Iceland and Ireland, Slovenia as well as Spain. The entertainment tips are fairly reliable and complete: *Let's Go* is the best guide to use when, for example, you find yourself in Helsinki looking for a place to tango. Moreover, its hotel tips have improved much in recent years. About ten years ago, as I discovered in London, following the *Let's Go* hotel guide could land the traveler in a creaking firetrap where, through flimsy walls, assorted clanks and shouts and the sounds of the Pet Shop Boys could be heard long into the night. *Let's Go* still stresses cheapness and convenience. But its housing recommendations now show more consideration of readers with varying interests and tastes.

The *Michelin Green Guide* focuses on the continent's "most important attractions and sights"; a separate *Red Guide* ranks restaurants and hotels, most of them very fine and many world-class. At over five hundred pages, *Michelin Green Guide* is fatter than Michelin's other guides to individual countries and cities. But it's nonetheless quite portable and beautifully illustrated—a model of thoughtful design. And like other Michelin guides, it cuts the clutter from its commentaries by passing judgment through the simple bestowal of stars. Thus, in Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate merits two stars ("worth a detour") and the Pergamon Museum three ("worth a journey").

Corbis

American tourists at the Spanish Steps in Rome, c. 1963.

Dependable and intelligently condensed, *Michelin Europe* is the only tourbook a reasonably resourceful visitor is likely to need. But then, perhaps most Americans bound for Europe want just the sort of hand-holding and effusive tip-giving Bramblett and Steves provide. They're tourists, after all, not travelers.

Of course, these are slippery terms, as Paul Fussell points out in his *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*. Both touring and traveling involve what D. H. Lawrence once termed "an absolute necessity to move," a yearning for the new and unknown. But tourists, understandably, seek comfort and refreshment brightened by a touch of edification. They want adventure—just not too much and without risk. They want to see the world and flee it, too.

Travelers—or at least travel writers—have other aims. Travel suggests

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a more leisurely use of time, a keener desire for exploration. It's less obsessed with seeing the sights than with uncovering the secrets of cultures and terrains. It courts discomfort and risk. "Your true traveler," observed the novelist and occasional travel writer Lawrence Durrell, "will not feel that he has had his money's worth unless he brings back a few scars." Travel writers tend to be loners and brooders convinced they've understood the world more fully when their ears are filled with languages not their own. They're forever running away from home. Think of V. S. Naipaul and Paul Theroux. Think of Graham Greene.

Guidebooks for tourists are a rather modern invention; it was Karl Baedeker who first made them popular in the early, Edwardian decades of the twentieth century. But travel writing is old, stretching back to Herodotus' histories and including over the centuries famous works by Marco Polo, Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, and Laurence Sterne. In the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and Robert Louis Stevenson all added notably to the genre, mixing personal observations with more or less straight reportage.

Travel writing has always been done particularly well in Britain, and, according to Paul Fussell, some of the best British travel writing came in this century, between the wars. He points to works by Robert Byron, Evelyn Waugh, and Peter Fleming, all of whom wrote in the 1920s and '30s, several decades before the fact of mass tourism, and just as the high sun of the British empire was starting to fade. Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure*, for example, is a classic of a certain sub-genre of British travel writing: the wry, self-mocking observations of the unflappable Englishman abroad.

Fussell offers several reasons for travel writing's popularity in Britain—including a desire to escape, if only through the pages of a book, the nation's "soot-caked" cities and rain-soaked landscape. "The geographical and linguistic insularity of the English," Fussell suggests, is "one cause of their unique attraction-repulsion" to traveling abroad. "Another reason they make such interesting travelers is the national snobbery engendered by two centuries of wildly successful imperialism." "It is the British of the '20s and '30s," Fussell points out, "who devised the term *Dagoland* to embrace everything from Genoa to the Orient."

But then, snobbery of a sort informs much modern travel writing, whatever its country of origin. Many travel writers are like the contributors to "alternative" free weeklies—those *Village Voice* imitators that thrive on futon ads in most major American cities. For them the world is an absurd but basically diverting place, filled with quaintly unhip shopkeepers and oddballs who've been planted in funky old neighborhoods for the bemusement of very hip contributors to alternative free weeklies.

Reid Bramblett
The Complete Idiot's Travel Guide to Planning Your Trip to Europe
MacMillan, 602 pp., $16.95

Rick Steves
Rick Steves' Best of Europe 1998
John Muir, 576 pp., $18.95

Caroline Sherman, et al., eds.,
Let's Go: Europe 1998
St. Martins, 944 pp., $19.99

Michelin Travel Staff
The Michelin Green Guide Europe
Michelin, 521 pp., $20

Paul Theroux shows something of this in such bestselling travel works as *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) and *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979). Theroux's writing is lively, amusing, and often a sheer pleasure to read. But it also leaves the impression that the places Theroux visits are essentially painted backdrops for his own travails and self-revelations. Theroux's work nearly always suggests that, East or West, the most interesting thing in the world is Paul Theroux.

Fortunately, there are other travel writers—notably Norman Lewis, perhaps the best travel writer of our times—who are neither snobbish nor self-absorbed. Throughout his nearly six-decade career, Lewis has won his share of literary prizes, good sales, and critical acclaim. Indeed, Graham Greene called him "one of the best writers, not of any particular decade, but of our century." Lewis never sought celebrity status; his photograph appears on none of his twenty-eight books, nearly half of them novels set in exotic locales. Lewis has long been drawn to places that until fairly recently have been far off the beaten tourist track: Thailand, Burma, remote villages in India, the jungles of Brazil. He's also shown a special fondness for the more "unspoiled" parts of Europe, including Farol, a fishing village on the Spanish coast. When Lewis first visited Farol in the 1950s, he found "what a gifted child with a paintbox would make of such a fishing village," including "a scattering of black goats, a church tower with a stork's nest, yellow boats pulled up on the beach, and pairs of women in bright frocks mending nets."

In *The World, The World*, a memoir published last year, Lewis shows how decades of mass tourism have changed many of his most cherished places. Farol, once "strenuous and calm," has suffered a "sudden tourist influx" that has prompted not only the construction of many new restaurants and hotels, but a heightened demand for waiters and other caterers to the tourist trade. As a result, the "self-sufficient and custom-bound" culture that Lewis found forty years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ago is fading, and—slowly but inevitably—"proud men who like their ancestors had gained their living from the sea, learned the correct and inconspicuous way of holding out their hands for tips."

In Thailand, such changes are even more striking. When Lewis first visited in the 1950s, "the only tourists were a handful of foreigners who did the rounds of the pagodas in a maximum of two days before catching the train back to Bangkok." But now, one finds "a social and aesthetic climate in which fake peasants are paid to be photographed by foreigners in fake villages." Worse, "this once most charming of lands," has been "tarnished by the sex-tourism for which it has become notorious." As a result, in Bangkok particularly, "it is hard to find a place of entertainment where strangeness does not pervade the atmosphere," or to avoid Americans and Europeans "arriving in droves in search of pleasures banned elsewhere by law."

Like many such memoirs of times now lost, *The World, The World* is bittersweet. But it amply illustrates Lewis's key virtues: his wonderfully clean prose, his clear-headed stance. It also features enjoyably sharp assessments of some of his literary contemporaries, including Ernest Hemingway and Ian Fleming (the travel writer Peter Fleming's more famous brother). Lewis rather liked the famously unlikable creator of James Bond, while "perceiving inexplicable weaknesses in the smooth façade." Lewis also agreed with Ian Fleming's "own view of himself as a writer: that he was mediocre."

Lewis is not. He has written many superb books and led an admirable and adventurous life. It's an enviable life, too. From the dust jacket of *The World, The World* we learn that—after years of traveling to many of the world's most distant and dangerous places—Lewis now "lives with his family in introspective, almost monastic, calm, in the depths of Essex, England." ♦

B&A

Syria Killer

The Peace Process According to Rabinovich

By Daniel Pipes

Itamar Rabinovich has unique credentials for writing about the failed peace talks Syria and Israel held from 1992 to 1996. He is a leading academic specialist on both Syria and Arab-Israeli negotiations, and he served during the 1990s as the Israeli ambassador to the United States and as Israel's chief negotiator with Syria.

Itamar Rabinovich
The Brink of Peace
The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations
Princeton Univ. Press, 288 pp., $24.95

The result is that his new study, *The Brink of Peace*, stands as a model of its genre: a book in which an aware participant provides both the inside skinny and the larger story—both the details known only to those who were there and the historical context—of what he rightly calls "an absorbing saga," neither burdening the reader with unnecessary information nor skimping on important facts.

As his title implies, however, Rabinovich also has a thesis: that Hafez al-Assad, the Syrian president, had in principle accepted peace with Israel and that the two states reached "the brink of peace." If Assad had only acted more urgently, Rabinovich holds, the two sides could have reached a deal and their conflict by now would be well on the way to solution.

Unfortunately, Assad conducted himself, in Rabinovich's view, "as if time were no constraint." This left the Labor government of Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Rabinovich himself to face the May 1996 elections without having secured a deal with Syria—which proved, in turn, one cause of the Labor party's defeat by Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud.

Rabinovich surmises that, after the elections, "Assad must have realized that he had badly miscalculated." He speculates that "Assad grasped fully" that he had missed an opportunity to conclude a deal with Israel. We might call this the optimistic interpretation of Assad's intentions: The dictator of Damascus genuinely wished to end the conflict with Israel, but his own tactical errors prevented him from doing so.

There is, however, another interpretation, the pessimistic one, which holds that Assad wasn't really seeking to end the state of war with Israel. He entered into negotiations with his enemy only as a means to improve relations with the West. America demanded a less hostile attitude toward the Jewish state, so he did what he had to do. But he never intended to sign a peace treaty with Israel. He wanted not closure but protraction, not peace but peace process.

To his credit, Rabinovich—though partisan to the optimistic view—does not shape the facts to buttress his argument. Indeed, he provides much evidence to support the pessimistic outlook. He recounts, for example, how Assad demanded that the issue of normalization (that is, what sort of peace the two countries would establish) be discussed only at the multilateral Arab-Israeli talks that he himself happened to be boycotting.

Equally, Rabinovich doesn't sanitize Assad's views ("Israel remained a rival, if not an enemy") or hide his own perplexity at Assad's actions. *The*

Daniel Pipes is editor of the Middle East Quarterly *and author of three books on Syria, most recently* Syria Beyond the Peace Process *(1996).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brink of Peace is littered with phrases like "we were deeply puzzled," "It is difficult to understand Assad's conduct," and "Many of Assad's decisions during this period have yet to be fully explained." Rabinovich candidly sums up his own implicit dissatisfaction with the optimistic analysis: "When all is said and done it is difficult to understand why Assad, despite his suspicions, reservations, and inhibitions, failed to take the steps that would have produced an agreement."

Rabinovich recounts how this puzzlement eventually led the Israeli prime minister to adopt—despite a belief in the possibility of a treaty with Damascus—the pessimistic view that Assad did not want to deal with Israel. For Rabin, "Assad's negotiating style and the substance of his positions" showed that the Syrian president "was not interested in genuine negotiation but rather in an American mediation or arbitration." Indeed, Rabinovich himself seems driven at last to the pessimistic interpretation, concluding that "Assad was more interested in obtaining a clear Israeli commitment to a withdrawal from the Golan than in coming to an agreement." He even refutes his book's optimistic title when he concludes that "at no time" in his four years of negotiating "were Israel and Syria on the verge of a breakthrough."

Rabin and Rabinovich alike find themselves forced toward the pessimistic interpretation because, no matter how positive their outlook, this interpretation makes better sense. If one assumes that Assad had no intention of signing an agreement with Israel, all the puzzle about his actions is swept away and his supposed miscalculations are revealed as canny decisions.

But however much logic forces him in the direction of pessimism, Rabinovich resists it. In a key passage, he explains how he can persist in his optimism:

> I was not perturbed by the fact that . . . Assad was primarily interested in transforming his country's relationship with Washington, and that his acceptance of the notion of peace with Israel was a necessary prelude to that transformation and not the product of a change of heart with regard to us. If a mutually acceptable compromise could be found and an agreement made, the change of heart would follow.

In other words, *Assad's intentions do not matter, for Israel could eventually co-opt the Syrians into a peaceful and civilized relationship*. Rabinovich never explains the mechanics by which this "change of heart" would occur—and that is not surprising, for it is a hope, not a plan. Rabinovich and his political superiors wanted a peace agreement with Damascus so badly, they were willing to believe that a "compromise" would eventually fix the problems staring them in the face. They may have looked like hard-nosed planners, but they were in fact pinning their country's future on a wish and a prayer.

This, finally, is what gave Israel's negotiations with the Syrians (and by extension, with the other Arabs, especially the Palestinians) an indulgent quality. *The Brink of Peace* shows, for instance, that the Israeli negotiators never raised the fact that Israel had won all its wars against Syria, as though to do so would have been ill-mannered and tactless. Likewise, the Israelis never mentioned the fact that, during the Cold War, Israel threw in its lot with the victorious United States, while Syria moved in orbit of the vanished Soviet Union.

As a result, instead of a chastened Damascus petitioning its victor, the talks exude a sense of parity, with the Syrians making demands and acting as Israel's equal. Presumably, Israel's leaders let the Syrians get away with this (with American encouragement) in the expectation that on the basis of this make-believe, "the change of heart would follow."

The same motive probably explains the Labor government's surprising tendency to accept Assad's positions as though he were sincerely

AP/Wide World Photos / Nati Harnik

Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin listen to a debate in the Knesset, May 5, 1995.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pursuing amity rather than tactically finding a publicity advantage. When Assad suddenly proposed implementing a Syrian-Israeli agreement not over the many years Rabin had proposed, but immediately, Rabinovich portrays the proposal as a serious bid for peace—"He was evidently worried by the passage of time"—instead of a coy trick to have Israel blamed for turning down a chance for instant peace.

In the same spirit, Rabinovich shows Israeli leaders accepting at face value Assad's fatuous statements about the need to find a peace "with dignity." Rather than present Assad as a crafty thug desperate to hold on to power in the face of murderous domestic opposition, Rabinovich presents Assad's "philosophy" of the negotiations. A reader who knows nothing about Middle Eastern politics could finish *The Brink of Peace* and never obtain any clear sense that Syria's totalitarian system differs from Israel's liberal democracy.

Itamar Rabinovich is a sophisticated historian and diplomat, and the Rabin-Peres governments he worked for had an ambitious vision of conflict resolution for their country. Unfortunately—as *The Brink of Peace* shows despite itself—their efforts were premised not on plans, but merely hopes. ♦

Up From Cynicism

Moral Guidance from a Surrogate Father

By Norah Vincent

It's one thing to shake a moralizing finger at the world and say, "Be good." It's quite another to show that virtue is its own reward. You can ask for adherence to traditional values simply because they're traditional, or you can show that virtue is right because it works. As C. S. Lewis once suggested, living sinfully is like running your car on the wrong gasoline: It's not so much bad morals as bad facts.

Jeffrey M. Schwartz
A Return to Innocence
Philosophical Guidance in an Age of Cynicism
Regan, 300 pp., $22

In a world as upside down as ours, neither an appeal to the past nor a demonstration of moral logic is likely to have much effect. Who listens to a nag when tradition is a dirty word? And who believes in ethical reasoning when the common good is believed to be more a social construct than a social contract?

Nonetheless, for those who haven't despaired of their times, the advantage is marginally on the side of moral demonstration—a strictly pragmatic take on virtue, an instrumental argument from cause and effect: Actions and ideas have consequences; the good works better than the evil.

In recent years, this sort of demonstration has been the best weapon in the neoconservative arsenal. It has been most effective at showing the effect of personal responsibility. You want to change the world? Then change yourself and, by example, change the people around you. Show, don't tell. Do good, and you will do well.

And that, in a nutshell, is Jeffrey Schwartz's moral philosophy as he expresses it in his new book, *A Return to Innocence*. It's also why, if they're shrewd, conservatives will take for their big-think, social-policy guru in the next presidential election a writer who understands the relation of virtue to effective truth—if not Schwartz himself, with his remarkably cogent primer on the examined life, then someone much like him.

In making his case, Schwartz draws heavily on Buddhist philosophy, using familiar if often misunderstood terms to elucidate his arguments. The word "karma," for example, is one most of us in the West understand to mean "fate." Schwartz, however, delves deeper into the meaning of the word, and tells us that it actually translates as "action" or "deed." Your karma is what you do, and, as Schwartz reminds us, according to a familiar law in physics, every action entails an equal and opposite reaction: Your deeds come back to you and become your fate. Good metaphysics turns out to be good physics and, more to the point, good civics. As Schwartz puts it in his introduction to the book:

> It is a consequence of bad ideas about human nature and the proper balance between individual freedom and responsibility that Patrick [the teenager to whom Schwartz addresses his book] and millions of his peers are growing up without their fathers. False, seductive, destructive ideas that appeal to the worst in us and flatter it as the best have led to epidemics of drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, crime, and violence. . . . To protect ourselves, and to begin to repair the damage to our world, we urgently need to be armed with good ideas—ideas firmly based on true and accurate information about our human nature and the conditions that encourage the best in us to thrive.

The Buddhist piece of this is, of course, very old information and of uncertain resonance in the West: The Judeo-Christian tradition puts it more familiarly and probably more accurately—or at least with greater sophistication than any Westerner can grasp in Eastern terms. But that

Norah Vincent is a free-lance writer in New York City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proves something of an advantage in *A Return to Innocence*, for Schwartz makes the old moral truth sound almost new.

Indeed, in relating it to public policy, he bolsters the truth of his old religious claims with new hard science. As a research psychiatrist at UCLA School of Medicine, and the author of *Brain Lock*, a study of obsessive-compulsive disorder, Schwartz is what might be called the conservative answer to Steven Pinker. Relying on his expertise about how the brain really works, Schwartz shows that mental discipline can actually change cranial biochemistry. When we use higher functions—willpower, for example—to control lower functions like hunger and the sex drive, we actually lay down fresh neurological tracks in our brains. And that makes controlling our cravings easier the next time around. Thus, according to Schwartz, Buddhist meditation and "mindfulness" turn out to be successful by empirical demonstration, their efficacy scientifically provable.

Bear in mind that Schwartz conveys all this as simply as possible, in a series of letters to a sixteen-year-old boy. If that leaves *A Return to Innocence* a little bit thin on the intellectual end, it is also what makes it such an affecting book. The sometimes deep and complicated information comes in bite-sized bits of paternal advice. A surrogate father to a teenage boy, Patrick Buckley, Schwartz addresses the young man's daily concerns about girls, sports, schoolwork, and friendship, giving practical advice on how to handle responsibly the situations teenagers face.

If his book's title has you thinking that Schwartz is some sort of neo-Victorian—a lightweight version of William Bennett—you'll be pleased to find that he's much more like a non-sectarian Michael Novak (who, as it happens, has just published a similar book with his daughter Jana, entitled *Tell Me Why*). Schwartz's prose has the same gentle, fatherly feel as Novak's, but he permits himself more theological latitude.

In *A Return to Innocence*, Schwartz builds his argument for a moral universe on a medico-mystical premise—that innocence is what the word literally means in its Latin root: an *in-nocere*, a doing of no harm. But he can also leave us to ponder the place where the hypothalamus meets the Four Noble Truths, where Buddha meets Edmund Burke. The result is a deeply moving book topical and true enough to keep the average adult and the average hungry-minded teen thinking about it long after they finish reading. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Clinton Offers to Give More DNA Samples to Prove It, Contemplates Dropping Last Name

I Was Genetically Predisposed Toward Fooling Around, Prez Tells Hillary

THE NEW NATIONAL ENQUIRER

#1 LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY PAPER IN AMERICA

$1.49/$1.79 CANADA

EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS:

THOMAS JEFFERSON AND SALLY HEMINGS' GREAT-GREAT GRANDCHILD!

First Black President Thesis Vindicated--Toni Morrison

• • •

I Am Napoleon's Long Lost Nephew--Newt Gingrich

• • •

The Federalists Are Doomed--William Kristol

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED